Chapter II

A Critical Study of Mahesh Dattani’s Stage Plays

Mahesh Dattani occupies a very distinct and illustrious place in the realm of Indian drama in English. He has manifested his individuality in so many ways. His presentation of problems from real life situations is significant contribution to Indian English Drama. Among modern Indian playwrights, he stands forth with singular distinctness, striking artistic perception, and immense dramatic guts. He is the most serious contemporary dramatist in Indian drama in English. He takes up serious problems prevailing in urban India. He, very successfully, gives voice to the problems and sufferings of the marginalized people of our society. His plays contain some important elements like human pathos, passions, conflict and appeal to human sentiment, which can immediately touch and stir common audience. He puts Indian drama in English to the level of world drama. The present chapter makes an in-depth critical inquiry into the seven stage plays of Mahesh Dattani. They are as under:

- Where There’s a Will - 1988
- Dance Like a Man - 1989
- Tara - 1990
- Bravely Fought the Queen - 1991
- Final Solutions - 1992-93
- On a Muggy Night in Mumbai - 1998
- Thirty Days in September - 2001

*Where There’s a Will* is one of the four earliest plays of Mahesh Dattani. The play is a drawing room comedy of a rich businessman, who tries to control his family even after his death through his ‘will’. The play is really very interesting and appealing. It generates a lot of laughter and mirth among the spectators. Despite its humorous trait, the play is very introspective and thought-provoking.
The play *Where There's a Will* has many trademark qualities of Dattani's play. Like other plays, the play has Gujarati milieu and successful runs on the stage. The play presents how women in their own homes are marginalized. Though the kitchen or home is described as the kingdom of women, they are no longer ruling over them. Instead, they are pushed on the margins of invisibility. It is attributed:

*Where There's a Will* has several interesting aspects. Mahesh described it as the exorcism of the patriarchal code. Women—be it daughter-in-law, wife or mistress—are dependent on men and this play shows what happens when they are

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Mahesh Dattani excels in fusing western models with native theatrical tradition. In the same way, his artistic perception is also fine fusion of both tragic and comic insight. If *Thirty Days in September* is the most solemn play of Dattani, *Where There's a Will* is the most comic in tone and treatment. The play is a satire on the water tight patriarchal code. He satirizes human follies and foibles in a very interesting way. In fact, no character is escaped from the stroke of his satire. Like Ben Johnson's *Every Man in his Humor*, all the characters are delineated with more or less sarcasm. The dramatist intends to bring change in society by hitting at the human faults and follies. It has been rightly observed:

Joy is the essence of life and I have always believed that theatre should exude delight. *Where There's a Will* is such a play. It is not only thought provoking and introspective but also provides an evening of pure entertainment.  

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*Where There's a Will* does both delight and teach. The play was first performed by Playpen at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore, on 23rd September 1988, as part of the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. The play is translated into Gujarati and Hindi by Suresh Rajda and Rajendra Mohan
respectively. Hindi show was performed in Tanzil Theatres, Mumbai on 25\textsuperscript{th} December, 1992 under the directorship of Jaspal Sendhu.

The narrative of the play takes places in the lavish house of Hasmukh Mehta, a doyen businessman and staunch follower of patriarchal system. The dramatist has introduced the ghost of Hasmukh Mehta to make watcher of his own actions. The stage is divided into three spaces namely the fancy dinning cum- living room, the bed room belonging to Hasmukh and Sonal Mehta, and the hideously trendy bedroom of their son Ajit, and his wife, Preeti. Hasmukh strictly followed steps of his father in his life. He wants his own son Ajit follow his footsteps in real life. He exercises the patriarchal authority over all the members of his family. He believes in ‘absolute power’. The dramatist focuses on fractured interpersonal relationship within the range of familial relationship. Like all modern families, there is a lack of emotional attachment and understanding towards others’ views and opinions. The character of Hasmukh Mehta can be analyzed in two ways -through his familial world and business world. He is the boss at the both the spaces. His relationship is plagued with grievances and unrest at home. However, he is enjoying the position of the ablest and the perfect boss at the business house.

Thus, Hasmukh Mehta is embodied with patriarchal canons and tried to control family even after his death through his ‘will’. He is both dead and alive, but his business remains unobstructed and unceasing. The play is divided into two acts and these two acts are subdivided each in two parts. The play begins at the lavish house of rich protagonist Hasmukh Mehta.

All the four members of the Mehta family stand in sharp contrast to their counterparts. Hasmukh Mehta is the autocratic head and demands unquestionable obedience from his family members, whereas his wife Sonal is quite subservient and subordinate to her husband. She has no choice of her own. She has learnt how to execute her husband’s instructions and orders in toto. In this sense, Hasmukh is anti-thesis to her. The play depicts how women are subjugated and suppressed by their male counterparts in
patriarchal social set up. When the play begins, Ajit is talking on phone and Hasmukh Mehta enters through the main door with his walking staff.

Ajit: (on the phone). Five lakhs. That’s all. Give me five lakhs and I’ll modernize the whole bloody plant. That’s what I tell my dad. I mean, come on, five lakhs is nothing!

Hasmukh: (to the audience) My son, the business man. Just listen to him. (CP: 455)

Hasmukh is a self made and led a deprived childhood. He is forty five year old man. He is described as Garment Tycoon. He criticizes his son Ajit’s ways. He observes categorically; “one of the richest men in this city. All by my own efforts. Forty five years old and I am a success in capital letters. Twenty-three years old and he is on the road to failure, in bold capital letters...” (CP: 464)

Ajit, young man of twenty three years, is the joint managing director of his father’s factory. According to Hasmukh, he is wasting money and is on his way to bankruptcy. He makes a very satirical statement that God has just forgotten to open an account for Ajit.

Hasmukh Mehta is projected as very autocratic father. He controls and checks the every movement of this son. He wants his son not as partner or owner of his property, but he wants his own son as a slave. Ajit Mehta is quite meek and occupies little importance at both the spaces. He can be called the filial subaltern. The play dramatizes the polities of patriarchy which doesn’t only marginalize the women folk of the family but also other male members of the family. Hasmukh Mehta has over powered identity of his son, Ajit, by exercising absolute control over his home and business affairs. He has no power to use the property of his father in his own way. He is excluded from decision making process in business. His father is highly ego-centric and horribly self-opinioned man who doesn’t allow Ajit to use his skill and talents for the business enhancement process. Strangely enough, Hasmukh Mehta has made Ajit the managing director of his companies.
However, he is not supposed to undertake any business errand and affairs at his own. He has to execute his father’s orders and command keeping his own say aside.

Ajit: Don’t I have any rights at all?

Hasmukh: You have the right to listen to my advice and obey my orders. (CP: 458)

Like Sonal to Hasmukh, Preeti is counterfoil to her husband Ajit. Preeti is a young, charming and graceful lady. She expects a baby. She is quite calculative and assertive lady. Hasmukh knows her well. Therefore, he says; “That’s my daughter-in-law, Preeti, pretty, charming, graceful and sly as a snake.” (CP: 56)

The theatre attempts to articulate mores and manners of the society intending to cheer people by lifting them from physical, social and mental problems and afflictions and also offers a piece of advice for leading life in a healthier and happier way. Dattani’ plays have Gujarati family as the setting or locate. The present play Where There’s a Will deals with the mechanics of middle class Gujarati family, showing how patriarchal canons control not only the lives of women of the family but also men of the family.

Since Hasmukh was leading businessman of the city, every newspaper limelighted his death news. His death news appeared in the newspaper under the caption ‘Garment Tycoon Dead’.

Hasmukh: (cutting.) ‘Garment Tycoon Dead.’ That felt good. You never really know how famous you are until you are dead. Of course, it’s at the bottom of page seven and it’s only six lines. But look at the obituary page. Filled with my photographs. All inserted by different companies. All mine, of course. (Throws the paper away) Now it’s all over. My life is over and I have no business
you see, I have made a special will! (Laughs) they are going to hate me for doing this to them! (CP: 479)

Dattani’s plays reveal at the end the skeleton in the cupboard. Where There’s a Will also has the skeleton in the cupboard. The skeleton is his mistress and his will. Soon after his demise, the will was read. It sets forth avenues of varied reaction and revelations, charges and counters charges, surprises and shocks, protestation and acceptance. There is an air of turmoil and upheavals in the family of Hasmukh Mehta caused by his ‘will’. It was soon, clear among them that authorization patriarch and garment tycoon will continue to dictate their lives through the terms and conditions inset in ‘will’. The will can be viewed as whip and mistress can be viewed as the agent. The ‘will’ was very complicated and detailed one. As per Hasmukh’s instruction, the lawyer summoned them exactly a one week after his death to read out the ‘will’. As per the ‘will’, none of the three Mehta family members has any legal right over the property of Hasmukh Mehta including their present living room.

Hasmukh has formed a charitable trust named Hasmukh Mehta Charitable Trust. He has donated all his property including finances, shares etc. to the trust. As per the will, they get a regular allowance from the trust. The trust will be dissolved when Ajit Mehta turns forty five. Everything remains with the trust till he is not forty five. He can use and utilize property and money after that period.

Further, according to the Will, Ajit has to attend office everyday at nine and he can leave at six p.m. in the evening. No new business project of Ajit will be sanctioned. If Ajit and other fail to abide by the terms and conditions, the trust will donate its funds to various charities as approved by Hasmukh. Thus, Hasmukh Mehta shuns his family making will and further more by making Kiran Jhaveri, as the trustee of the trust. He has a kept namely Kiran Jhaveri who was a very shrewd and hard headed marketing executive. She lives in company flat in posh locality. Hasmukh has taken meticulous care and every precautionary step to avoid any challenge to the validity of his will. He had a qualified physician as a witness number one to his
will and attached a certificate stating that signatory was of sound mind etc. The certificate was signed by their family doctor, Jhunjhunwalla, who attends him regularly. So contesting the will was out of question.

Hasmukh’s personality displays moods and temperament of business tycoons who throws aside any person not fruitful for the enhancement of their business interest. Hasmukh is obstinate and adamant, gritty and gutsy. As a businessman, he is quite alert and accurate. He promptly grabs opportunity of utilizing other for his business gain and profits.

After sometime, Mrs. Kiran Jhaveri comes to Hasmukh’s house to stay with his family members. So, the family is surprised, rather socked. They don’t want to let her stay with them. However, they decide to keep her with them after knowing the instructions provided by Hasmukh in his ‘will’. Preeti asks her what if they don’t keep her with them:

Preeti: What if we refuse to let you stay with us?

Kiran: (Studies Preeti) As the trustee of the Hasmukh Mehta charitable Trust, I have the right to make a statement declaring that since the recipients of the trust, namely you all, are not complying with the rules set down by the deceased, the holdings of the trust will be divided between certain charitable institutions recommended by the founder. Which will mean that you won’t ever get to see even a single rupee earned by your father in-law. Now will you refuse to let me stay here?

Preeti: Welcome home (CP: 494)

Kiran Jhaveri is a very well preserved woman who looks anywhere between thirty and forty years. Her husband was a drunkard, especially fond of imported whisky, Jonnie Walker. He was suspended from the job for this mal-practice. Sacked from the job, he can’t afford buying the whisky. So he allowed his wife meeting and seeing Hasmukh. Kiran admits:
Anyway, it all worked out to be quite convenient. I got a
you know. (CP: 491)

Preeti is quite scheming and selfish lady. Soon after the reading of the will, she begins to behave differently. She shows true colour of her personality. She wants to contest will but all in vain. Hasmukh Mehta has made it leak proof. No one can find way out. Moreover, he has made Kiran as the trustee. So, she can put a check her and stops them finding any loophole in the will.

All the three members of the Mehta family have to learn new lessons every day under the Madam Jhavari. She is teaching them at home and office. At home, she is guiding and instructing Sonal and Preeti, whereas she is taking hard task from Ajit at the office. Now, they realize the very complexity and toughness of the situation.

Hasmukh ruled his family when he was alive. After his death, he tried to control his family from his grave through his will. Kiran puts: “Hasmukh was intoxicated with his power. He thought he was invincible. That he could rule from his grave by making this will. (CP: 508)

Actually, Hasmukh didn’t trust any of his family members. He reserves his doubts about their ways and intentions. He trusted completely in Kiran Jhaveri, who was working as an executive in his office and has won his confidence. She has got both brain and body. She caters his physical and emotional needs. Hasmukh puts: “ I mean, a man in my position to be careful. I needed a safer relationship. Something between a wife and a pick-up. Yes. A mistress! It didn’t take me very long to find her. She was right there in my office. An unmarried lady. Not an ordinary typist or even a secretary. A shrewd hard-headed marketing executive. If there was any one in my office who had brains to match mine, it was her. She is now one of the directors of the company. Not entirely due to her shrewd head. She lives now in a company flat in a posh locality. I won’t tell you where. Well, it’s walking distance from here. Convenient for me. All right, what’s wrong with having a
bit on the side? Especially since the main course is always without salt. Okay, okay, less salt.” (CP: 473)

Hasmukh Mehta has all praise for her. She has fine body to cater his sensuous desires and brilliant brain to run his business in an effective manner. No one knows about their affair until he dies. After his death, the inside saga comes to the forefront as it was also desired by him. She could succeed in having his accolades. All others have lost his sympathy and confidence.

Hasmukh criticises her wife by calling her dry and good for nothing. He calls her mud. To Hasmukh, Ajit is not competent enough to run his business. He lacks the nitty-quitty of the business world. Only person who possesses the guts, the shrewdness and proper spirit to reign supreme in industry is Kiran Jhaveri, who is quite commanding and courting as well as daring and diplomatic lady.

It seems that initially he succeeds in his intentions. Gradually, he realizes that his desire to control over his death is collapsing slowly. He has appointed Kiran to set his family order and check them leading lives in their own fancies. Moreover, Kiran makes certain revelations about his personality. Kiran tells Sonal, “He depended on me for everything. He thought he was the decision maker. But I was. He wanted me to run his life. Like his father had. (Pause) Hasmukh didn’t really want a mistress. He wanted a father. He saw in me a woman who would father him! (Laughs. Hasmukh cringes at her laughter.) Men never really grow up!” (CP: 510)

She added that she felt pity for his attempts at ruling over his family after his death, through his will. His desire ruling over the family results from the fact that his family was ruled over by his father. He was just a good boy to his father throughout his life. That’s why he couldn’t tolerate Ajit objecting to him. He wants Ajit to him as he was to his father. His life was overshadowed by his father’s and wants Ajit’s to be overshadowed by his life.
The play focuses on emptiness and uselessness of strict adherence to patriarchal code. One of the major thematic threads that dissect from the play is the conflicting relationship between father and son. It depicts the clash between conservative notions and contemporary generation. Both father and son have their own viewpoints regarding life and business. The father strictly believes that he has right notions regarding son’s life, whereas son rejects the idea of complete command over his life. At the very beginning of the play, Ajit expresses his displeasure regarding his father’s idea. He is quite young and innovative. He wants to give touch of modernity to his plant. He needs five lakh rupees. Hasmukh doesn’t trust his son’s ways of world and his ability of dealing with business affairs. He considers him “zero” in business and practical affairs, whereas Ajit feels that his father is hard-liner and stubborn fellow. He doesn’t respect anybody’s say in decision making process. Hasmukh thinks that his son is very novice and silly in the world of business. He makes mockery of his son and shows his displeasure towards his attitude.

Later in the play, Kiran Jhaveri appreciates Ajit’s invincible spirit for telling truth on the face of his father. Ajit is not a blind follower of his father Hasmukh’s footsteps as Hasmukh did to his father. However, Ajit doesn’t raise much voice against the autocratic regime of his father. He just disapproves his father’s views and ideology. Kiran appreciate his revolutionary spirit in this manner. “He may not be the greatest rebel on earth, but at least he is free of his father’s beliefs. He resists. In a small way, but at least it’s a start. That is enough to prove that Ajit has won and Hasmukh has lost.” (CP: 510)

Ajit asserts his individualistic identity. He protests against parental hegemony. In this sense, father-son relationship is a post colonial dichotomy of contemporary society. He is content at the idea that he is defiant. He has challenged the dictatorship of his father.

Ajit: All right. I can’t fight him now. He has won. He has won because he’s dead. But when he was alive, I did protest. In my own way.
(laughs) Yes, I’m happy I did that. Yes, I did fight back. I did do ‘peep peep’ to him! That was my victory. (CP: 501)

Thus, the play dramatises the discord and disharmony between the father-son relationships. Father and son are shown at constant fight. There is a nerve-war between them. The play depicts the forced harmony among the members of the same family. In this sense, the play may be deemed as the postcolonial protest against the colonilaisations of self and identity.

Sonal Mehta is the most tragic-comic character in the play. She lacks self confidence and discreet. She is a parasite creature in the play. Her life is dominated by others. In the play, she constantly depends on her sister Minal in every matter of her life. Her character lends a humorous touch to the play. Tragedy of her life is that most characters in the play blame her by one or another way. After the arrival of Kiran in her house, her condition becomes more pathetic and now she has to depend upon the mistress of her husband. However, she found a good friend in her soon. Sonal has learnt so many new lessons and also new things about her husband through Kiran. Therefore, she tells Kiran. “How little I knew him. If I had understood him when he was alive, I would have died laughing.” (CP: 510)

Thus, a sea change occurs in her nature and thinking at the end. Her attitude towards her sister and other is totally changed. The play ends her denying any help from her sister Minal.

Kiran: (to Sonal) Your sister just said some of the rudest things to me.

Sonal: Oh, did she? Give me the phone. (On the phone) Hello? Yes, Minal, this is Sonal! don’t another maharaj, not from you at least! ...I just don’t, that’s all... Well, as far as I’m concerned you can go jump into a bottomless pit! (Slames the phone down and turns towards Kiran) (CP: 516)
Dattani's plays peep into the past and find out the reality. His peeping into past is not myth-seeking attempt, but he dives into the past for bringing out the reality lying in the darkness, at the dark bottom of the past. The realization of past error helps the character understanding present in a better way. It has got modern relevance. It is because of this; his plays are seen and enjoyed again and again.

The play Where There's a Will shows that there is no significant improvement in the plight of the women as though there is spread of education and progress of mankind in almost all the human sectors. It seems that male pride or ego is the root cause of the present plight of the women in our society. Earlier, it was strongly believed that empowerment of women can be done through imparting proper education and employment. The play seeks to present that education and economical empowerment has failed to improve the quality of women’s lives in our society. This is quite explicit through the conversation between Kiran and Sonal. Kiran is well educated and employed in the office of Hasmukh Mehta, who later on, raises her to the position of directorship. Sonal is not fortunate enough to have proper access to education. So, she considers Kiran a fortunate lady. This is how Kiran falsifies Sonal’s notion by narrating her unhappy past.

Sonal: You are so lucky. You are educated, so you know all this.

Kiran: Wrong. I learnt my lessons from being so close to life. I learnt my lessons from watching my mother tolerating my father when he came home every day with bottles of rum wrapped up in newspapers... (CP: 508)

It is quite identical that women are suffering on account of no fault of their own. Nor are they suffering due to lack of education and employment. They are the victims of man’s vain pride and false ego. They are striving to avoid onslaught of male chauvinism. It is observed:

Interweaving his narrative around the scheming and plotting of the family members who apparently
Dattani reflects on the issue of gender roles and their miserable plights. Even in modern times, women are being treated as sex object and exploited physically and mentally. Feminine ‘self’ has not been restored yet. The dramatist is worried at the continuation of sorry state of women from one generation to another one. The wrath and anguish of the dramatist can be perceived through the following utterances of Kiran.

Kiran: Isn’t it strange how repetitive life is? My brothers. They have turned out to be like their father, going home with bottles of rum wrapped up in newspapers. Beating up their wives. And I-I too
am like my mother. I married a drunkard and I listened to his
swearing. And I too have learnt to suffer silently. Oh! Where will
all this end? Will the scars our parents lay on us remain forever?
(CP: 508)

Dattani foregrounds the people thrown to the periphery for giving
vent to their pent up fillings. Such characters interact directly with psyches of
the audience and thereby make audience self-critical of their own thoughts
and ideas.

Dattani extensively exorcises patriarchal code through his
dramatic art. Hasmukh Mehta wants unquestionable obedience and
unchallengable authority at home and at the office respectively. Therefore, he
doesn’t allow growing the ‘self’ of his son, Ajit who defies the autocratic father,
but he fails to articulate his own space. He doesn’t cow tow to patriarchal
authority. Nor does he revolt against him significantly. He just tries to assert
his identity before his father.

The introduction of supernatural element is a very humourous
and interesting one. The most amazing thing is that the ghost of Hasmukh
Mehta watches his own actions after his death. So, the play has two
Hasmukhs- the dead and the alive. It is observed:

What interested me particularly was its
philosophical twist. To be the watcher of one’s self
is to make intelligent changes in this life. In Where
There’s a Will, has control over his family through
his money and forgoes an opportunity to improve
his interpersonal relationship. As do most of us.
Consequently, when he became the watcher of his
actions, he perceives that his desire for control has
led him to be the victim of his own machinations
unlike Kiran who uses power play to essentially
improve her relationships. 4
Where There’s a Will dramatizes the social realism in a very comical and satirical way. The play is replete with laughter and mirth. The tone of sarcasm and humour runs throughout the play. Dattani’s creative genius handles sobriety and humour side by side very successfully. The familial interaction is often very comical and satirical.

One of the most notable things is that the names of all the characters signify certain virtues and ideas, but none of the characters act according to the virtue or merit symbolized by their names. For example, Hasmukh meaning a smiling face. Hasmukh never provides his family members the opportunity to smile. In the same way, Ajit means unconquerable. Ajit can’t win free heart accolades from Hasmukh.

The ghost of Hasmukh generates a lot of laughter and mirth in the drama. It observes and analyzes posthumous activities and events taking place in his own house. When alive, he has managed to dictate the rules and regulations for controlling the members of his family by preparing a will. He has invested powers and authority in Kiran Jhaveri to carry out the business and household affairs as per terms and conditions specified by him, but the ghost is disappointed when it sees that Kiran is using power so invested in her for strengthening her own interpersonal relationships with the members of Hasmukh Mehta’s family. This is how the ghost of Hasmukh expresses its displeasure. “You are here to set my family in order. Don’t forget your job.” (CP: 508)

The play is both funny and philosophical. The dramatist mingles them in a very innovative and meaningful way. It has been analyzed:

invisible presence of Hasmukh especially after his appearance as Ghost, his mate observations and the free display of the inner feelings of different characters against the authority of Hasmukh, is a unique device for self assessment for the characters.  

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The play ends with Sonal's assertion of confidence in Kiran denoting the newly developed bondage of mutual understanding and trust between the wife and the mistress.

Dattani exploits the death of Hasmukh as a dramatic device - the soul of Hasmukh surveying and commenting on the ongoing affairs, the ensuing responses – all these definitely have comic overtones but simultaneously these are also imbued with philosophical import.\(^6\)

When alive, Hasmukh was suffering from certain diseases like high blood pressure, high cholesterol etc. The ghost’s remark about this is quite comical: “There’s nobody home. Ah! (Rises and stretches) It feels good to be dead. No more kidney problems, no backaches, no irregular heartbeats,

" (CP: 479)

The play exposes the illusion of perfect and complete control over the family for a longer period. Here the question arises in our mind why a man aspires too much for authority and power. Does it signify any value of life? Apparently- it doesn’t attach any meaning to human existence. Nor does it help in improving quality of human life. Dattani is convinced that it is an attempt to make oneself secure and survive. So, man’s drive for the domination arises out of his own apprehension of insecurity.

Though Where There’s a Will is described as a drawing room comedy, it functions better than a tragedy in its effect and appeal on the minds and hearts of the audience. The play has thematic richness, brilliant dialogue delivery, touch of humor and satire, suitable dramatic structure. It is assumed:

Satire, irony, gallows, humor and other mutations of comic spirit will be the guiding force of our theatre in the coming years and tragedy has little
to offer to rebellious generation obsessed by the
danger of mega deaths. 7

The dramatist mainly reflects on the issues of gender
discrimination and evil of patriarch along with host of other issues like father-
son, husband-wife relationship, evil of capitalism in the post colonial purview.
Hasmukh blames his wife for his own extra-marital relationship. Hasmukh
observes:

enjoyed sex. Twenty five years of marriage and I haven't enjoyed sex with
her. So what does a man do? I started eating out. Well, I had the money. I
could afford to eat in fancy places. And what about my sex life? Well, I could
afford that too. Those expensive ladies of the night in the five star
hotels! (Smiles at some pleasan

Something between a wife and a pick-up. Yes. A mistress! It didn't take me

(CP: 473)

Hasmukh Mehta has no respect and love for his wife Sonal. She
is to him good for nothing. In fact, she is a chaste and obedient wife, but what
Hasmukh expects from wife is something disgusting one. As he says; “Then I
should be very happy man. I've got a loving wife who has been faithful to me
like any dog would be.” (CP: 473)

His word throws ample lights on the fact that Hasmukh's notion
of faithful wife is as good as faithful dog that acts as per provided training
without using her own discretion. Actually, Sonal is innocent and ignorant
woman who doesn't know about his sexual lust and his enjoyment with night
women. She is devoted and descent wife, but her husband is perverted and a
rude creature. At the end, Sonal and Kiran join hands to eradicate the evil of
sexual colonialism. They are endowed with the ability to assess and
subsequently shaking off the unjust shackle of patriarchy.

As a matter of fact, all trouble comes out of Hasmukh's false
notions of joy and happiness of life. He considers domination as the only and
final system which can bring joy and happiness in the family. Ironically he fails
to understand that domination kills joy of human heart and soul. Domination
flourishes killing others’ self and identity. It is, in fact, biggest hurdle in building up the premise of happiness. It is rightly observed: “The garb of authority maintained by Hasmukh was method to save his own inner self from clashes of the outside world.”

The play has philosophical twist and a happy end. The play explores the deteriorated inter-personal relationship among members of the same family. The viewers witness father v/s son, husband v/s wife. All are shown at war and running after money. The play stands as an outstanding for showing the protagonists as the watcher of his own action. He realizes that he has been made victim of his own mechanism. He vested in Kiran with powers; to fulfill his desire for his posthumous control over family, but she exercises these powers to improve her relationship. The ghost of Hasmukh witnesses that he has been dismissed as a shadow of his father, a man to be pitied on, a man without his own dreams and desire, vision etc.

The play Dance Like a Man, a stage play in two acts, is one of the most wonderful dramatic creations of Mahesh Dattani. The stage performance of the play has earned a critical acclaim in India and abroad. In this play, Dattani explores pathos of human predicament in the subtlest way. It embodies a brilliant study of human relationships as well as human weaknesses. The play depicts the clash between issues such as marriage, career and the place of a woman in patriarchal social set up. It deals with the lives of the people who feel exhausted and frustrated on account of the hostile surroundings and unfavourable circumstances. The story is unfolded in time past and time present.

The play was first performed at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore on 22 September 1989 as a part of the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. Later on, it was staged at the NCPA Experimental Theatre, Mumbai on 14 February, 1990 under the directorship of Mahesh Dattani. It was also enacted by Prime Time in 1995 under the directorship of little Dubey. Still this production company continues to tour occasionally.
The stage has multilevel sets. The place is a dimly-lit room in an old fashioned house in the heart of the city. Behind the entrance of this room, there is a modern looking rear panel which helps in revealing a garden and a dance practice hall at upstage left. The furniture arranged in the room is at least forty years old. The garden and living room symbolizes the past and present with the help of flashback device and split scenes device. The play presents the flux of conscience dealing with past and present scenarios.

The first act begins with conversation between Lata and Viswas and ends with Jairaj’s revolt against his father. Jairaj and Ratna leave the house of Amritlal Parekh to get rid of rules and regulations imposed upon them by him. The second act begins with Amritlal censuring Jairaj and Ratna who are standing patiently. The time is 1940s - two days later Jairaj and Ratna left home and evidently they have comeback, defeated.

The play *Dance Like a Man*, a saga of domestic conflict, revolves around the lives of 62 years old *Bharatnatayam* dancer, Jairaj Parekh and his wife, Ratna, who is also a *Bharatnatayam* dancer. They are living, with their only daughter Lata, in the old fashioned but a big house, which is situated in the heart of the city. Lata is an aspiring and promising young dancer. She finds herself in love with a young man named Viswas and has decided to marry him provided her parents accept Viswas as their son-in-law.

All the action of the play takes place at the present living room of Jairaj Parekh. Since the play oscillates between time past and time present, the present living room often changes into a rose garden, which denotes past events and presents, Amritlal Parekh, father of Jairaj, as the head of the patriarchal family system. The living room is associated with present showing Jairaj and Ratna in their sixties and rose garden indicates past showing Jairaj and Ratna as a young couple. With the change of spot light, the scene keeps on changing. Dattani has managed economical arrangement of the actors. All the performers are assigned double role. In all, there are four performers. Out of the four, three perform the dual roles. Young boy performer plays the role
of young Jairaj and Viswas, Lata’s fiancé and young lady performer plays the role of young Ratna as well as Lata. Only the old woman performer is assigned a single role i.e. role of older Ratna. The older Jairaj also plays role of his father Dattani is quite aware of the dynamics of theatre and proper usage of available resources. Economy of actors imparts a rare touch to the play.

The spotlight keeps on picking past and present scenario. Shift in the consciousness, split scenes technique etc. are employed in the drama to connect the past with the present. By skillful combination of cinematographic and narrative device, Dattani makes theatre more suitable for Indian milieu. When the play begins; Vishwas has arrived at Jairaj’s house for seeking approval from Lata’s parents about his marriage with Lata. Jairaj and Ratna have gone out to see the health of their musician, C. V. Srinivas, who has tripped and broken his arm. In the beginning, there is a lovely conversation between Viswas and Lata.

Like Lata, Vishwas is also the only son of his parents. Unlike Lata, Viswas has no heart for art and dance. His father runs mitthai shop on the commercial street in the town and owns half of the building on the road. He is one of the moneyed persons of the town. Viswas helps his father in the family business of selling sweets.

From their conversation, we also come to know that before marriage, Jairaj and Ratna also were good friends and stayed in the same mohalla. Jairaj has a very big dance hall in his house. In her childhood, Lata enjoyed watching her parents practicing dance in the hall. After the marriage, she also expects Vishwas allow her to practice at this hall.

The play encapsulates their present tension and past struggle as well as their present efforts and past discontentment. They reflect upon their past struggle, success and failures as the dancers. This unveils seeming harmony between the two and puts forth a marriage discord and domestic conflict that forms the substance of the play. The opening scene of the play
provides important information about all the people of the play and their social and family background. Thus, it functions as an exposition of the play.

After sometime, Jairaj and Ratna appear on the stage. The arrival of Jairaj and Ratna changes a very happy atmosphere of the play into a sad one. They are highly perturbed about Lata’s performance. Lata is to perform at a high profile dance festival and their mridangist is unfit to accompany her at the performance. Their extreme worry and concerns about Lata’s performance at high profile dance party sets aside the matrimonial conversation for which they have gathered.

They have gathered to talk about Lata’s marriage with Viswas. They do not talk about marriage, but they are talking about the performance. Jairaj and Ratna pick up quarrel time and again. They criticize and blame each other revealing their past struggle as dancers. So, Viswas advises them not to throw mud at each other. Ratna develops much tension and feels headache. She is frustrated and recalls her father-in-law, Amritlal Parekh, who didn’t like his son’s career as a dancer. In spite of a seeming harmony, it soon becomes clear that there is a little joy and satisfaction in their married life. Viswas makes to leave the house because of quarrel between Jairaj and Ratna. So, Jairaj insists him to stay and have discussion over his marriage with Lata. He also expresses his regret for not showing proper hospitality. Viswas informs him about his family background and business. Jairaj also informs Viswas about his father who had also made money from buildings. Jairaj’s father was one of the richest persons in the town. He spent his money helping others, but he didn’t invest his money for his son’s hobby or desire. Jairaj condemns his father for helping others.

After knowing Viswas’ family background and business especially his willingness to allow Lata dance after marriage, Jairaj and Ratna agree upon the marriage between Lata and Viswas. After the departure of Viswas, Jairaj and Ratna, again, reflect upon their past struggle as dancers. They have to satisfy themselves with the realization of being average dancers. So they, now, hope to have good performance of Lata.
Dattani has used time shift technique in the play. Amritlal Parekh was a man of liberal ideology, but he didn’t like his son’s obsession with dance. So, he strongly objected his son’s obsession of dance and his association with other dancers. He also checked the movements of Ratna. Many a time, there had been quarrel between father and son. The father is traditional and the son is modern in his ways of life. The father symbolizes traditional values, whereas the son symbolizes modern outlook. The father and the son are shown constantly at war.

The play is a bitter commentary upon a patriarchal family system. The playwright shows us how the autocratic father tries to check the movements and manners of his son and his daughter-in-law, although the father is considered as a man of progressive ideas and liberal views. The play dramatizes the conflict between the age and the youth through the characters of the old father and the young son. The family ties and marriage discord are highlighted through series of conflicts among the members of a single family. Amritlal Parekh upholds the traditional values, whereas his son, Jairaj, seeks to overthrow it through his course of action.

Jairaj: I can’t even have a decent rehearsal in this house.

Amritlal: You can’t have a decent rehearsal in this house? I can’t have some peace and quiet in my house! It’s bad enough having had to convert the library into a practice hall for you. (CP: 414)

Despite being a social reformer, Amritlala doesn’t like his daughter-in-law Ratna’s association with a ‘devdasi’ and learning art of dance at her house as he fears of being spoiled his family reputation. The play highlights the stigma that clings to the life of a ‘devdasi’, the dancer of the temple.

Amritlal: We are building ashrams for these unfortunate women! Educating them, reforming them...
Jairaj: Reform! Don’t talk about reform. If you really wanted any kind of reform in our society, you would let them practice their art. (CP: 416)

Amritlal thinks that supporting and allowing them to practice their art is an indirect encouragement for open prostitution, but Jairaj has high regard and respects for them and their art.

Jairaj: Send them back to their temples! Give them awards for preserving art. (CP: 416)

Amritlal holds a very different view and believes that the most of them have nothing to do with their art and engaged in trading of blood and flesh. So they are not suitable for temples.

Amritlal: I will not have our temples turned into brothels!

Jairaj: And I will not have any art run down by a handful of stubborn narrow minded individuals with fancy pretentious ideals. (CP: 416)

Amritlal also tries to control the movement and manners of Ratna. In this way, the clash between the tradition and the modernity is heightened through the conflict between Amritlal and Ratna. Amritlal knows that Ratna is going to visit a devdasi instead of going to temple.

Amritlal: You know very well where, because that’s where you go every Monday!(Ratna does not respond.) It was fortunate for me that it was Patel who saw you going there. I can trust him to keep his mouth shut. He called me, out of concern for our family name.

Ratna: I haven’t done anything to spoil the family name. (CP: 419)

Further,

Ratna: Yes. My husband knows where I go and have his permission.
Amritlal: Your husband happens to be my son. And you are both under my care. It is my permission that you should ask for (CP: 420)

Ratna is determined to learn the art of abhinaya from Chenni amma, who is oldest living exponent of the Mysore school and is the only link they have with the old school. Moreover, she is of seventy-five and dying. Hence, it was important for both Chenni amma and Ratna to impart and to receive knowledge of art. Ratna asserts: "You can’t stop me from learning art!" (CP: 421) Amritlal strongly objects Ratna’s dancing in old lady’s courtyard as he says:” And people peer over her walls to see my daughter-in-law dancing in her courtyard.” (CP: 420) Ratna calls her dancing as divine activity. As she puts: “Yes, Dancing the divine dance of Shiva and Parvati.” (CP: 420)

Thus, the play also focuses on the plight of ‘devadasis’. In fact, all the forms of dance and drama are connected with religious ceremonies and rituals. The drama has its roots in temples and church. Here Bharatnatyam has close connection with temples. Devadasis performed the dance of bharatnatyam in the temple. They were paid for their services by the temple authorities. Gradually, the evil of sexual exploitation did enter here and spoiled the image of devadasis. Since they were poor, they were exploited to gratify the sexual desires of the priests and other rich people. In this way, a stigma was associated with their lives and their profession, bharatnatyam.

Further, this form was greatly discouraged on the pretext that it was too erotic. However, it began to reappear in the pre-independence period with the efforts and interest of some genuine lovers of this art form. To the question: could you tell me more about your other plays? By Rana Uniyal, Dattani replies;

Well, the other play which I think I could talk about is Dance Like a Man which is because we talked about my Bharatnatyam background. It is about Bharatnatyam dancers. Again in their old age, when they are in their 60s and they are looking back on to their struggling days, when they had their ideals and in the 50s where there was a
stigma attached to the dance forms; that it is a
dance form of the Devdasis. It’s a prostitute’s
dance and people from respectable families didn’t
perform or practice that dance form. It is doubly
difficult for the man. You know, what business
does a man have learning a prostitutes’s dance.
So it brings about gender roles, what is expected
of gender as well. And also the tensions between
the couple and how, they solve, how they felt that
they used their relationship to develop their
careers, dances and how they reconcile to the fact
that the time wasn’t right for them.  

With the shift of consciousness in the past, Amritlal Parekh
appears on the scene. He has no heart or love for art. He speaks about art
very contemptuously. He forbids Jairaj mixing with other dancers especially
imitating the manners of his Guruji. He asks Jairaj not to invite his Guruji at
their house because he strongly dislikes ways and manners of the Guruji.

Amritlal: He will not come here tomorrow. I will send him a personal letter
of regret.

Jairaj: (to Amritlal). As long as we are under your care Moves
towards the bedroom.) (CP: 423)

Jairaj and Ratna leave the house as the protest against
traditional notions and restrictions imposed upon them by Amritlal. Jairaj
becomes highly excited and agitated. He doesn’t want to stay even a minute
further and resolves to never set a foot in the house again.

Jairaj: We don’t need anything fancy. (Turns around and speaks
defiantly) As from now we are no longer under your care. And
will never be again. Never. (Exits followed by a bewildered
Ratna.) (CP: 424).
In this way, Jairaj and Ratna go away from their house. The clash between the father and the son symbolizes the clash between tradition and modernity. It is a battle between traditional and conservative father and a son with modern outlook. They go away, throwing old restrictions to the wind. His determination and tenacity to adhere to what he wishes to do compel him to leave the house.

play that examines authority and prejudice socially and culturally and as we sit in the dark watching the story unfold between time past and time present, Mahesh Dattani forces us to examine our own individual and collective consciousness.10

Jairaj makes himself free from the clutches of autocratic father and also from the unwritten laws of family conduct. This is the climax of the play. The spectators witness their retreat and feel a sense of pity and sympathy for them, as they come back after two days. They might have realized that the house of their autocratic father is better than the world that exists outside. This suggests that they have been exposed to the hostile surroundings that make them feel frustrated and exhausted. Actually, the hostile surrounding is the very root cause of the frustration. Modernity tastes the fruit of defeat. The youthful rebellion started against the rigid and stubborn age is subdued. Jairaj yields to his old father’s whims and fancy compromising with his revolutionary spirit. There is a notable change in Jairaj’s mind. Highly spirited and rebellious Jairaj turns into a very submissive and polite person. The spectators, sitting in the dark, watch the transformation of assertive and adamant Ratna into submissive and subservient lady. She has become gentle, reliant and polite. Jairaj also passes through a process of transformation, which signifies for him a change from rebel to subservient. They kow tow to unwritten laws of family conduct and also accepts the rules and code of conduct provided by the tautocratic father.
Or course, a change also occurs in the mind of Amritlal Parekh. He doesn’t make them feel ashamed of their defeat. He allows his son to dance and asks him to take up dance as a profession not as a hobby and also becomes ready to provide money. However, he doesn’t consider dance a right place for investing money. More so, he allocates his library hall to be used as practice hall for the dance.

The clash between tradition and modernity is also suggested through the marriage between Viswas and Lata. As Vishwas says: “My Father almost died when I told him I’m marrying outside the caste. Wait till he hears this.” (CP: 389) Of course, the dramatist just makes a hint at it. He doesn’t stop to elaborate it.

The play also throws some light on the tragic death of their baby, left to the care of an ayah. It would not be improper to say that their excessive concern for dance diverts them from their care for the baby. Many a time, Jairaj and Ratna would come late at night and the baby was taken care of by ayah at such nights. Being busy with dance, they couldn’t take proper care of the baby. Their excessive involvement in dance becomes an indirect cause of the death of the baby, Shankar.

Jairaj and Ratna managed Sheshadri as a musician at the dance party and did every possible effort for the success of their daughter. Actually Ratna did painstaking efforts for Lata’s best performance. Lata performed as per their expectation and won acclaim from one and all. She becomes the most famous dancer. She dwells at the summit of success. Jairaj and Ratna are very happy for having had Lata’s best performance. She received rave reviews and recognition even beyond her expectations. The art of dance has placed her above all. She is described as the ‘Shining Star’. The success of Lata generates discussion and debate among the members of the family. The art has its merits and demerits. It gives name and fame. It also begets jealousy and grievance among the members of the family. Lata’s performance was appreciated by chief minister. Now they want Lata perform at national festival in Canada and also expect the same success therein.
the leading critics gave reviews about her performance, So, Ratna thinks that her hard work is rewarded. This makes Jairaj jealous of her. Ratna receives call from Dr. Gowda. She talks,

reason to be thrilled. And if a person no less than the president

Lata finished her tillana

Jairaj (looks up from his paper). He was in a hurry to go to the toilet. (CP: 428)

Dattani’s works display the theme of frustrations ensuing from the conservative and conventional as well as unfriendly surroundings. He develops our perception of marriage discord through a several devices. The play also shows psychological conflict resulting from a strong desire for being national celebrities. The play has been designed in such a way that it leaves no room for misconception in our visual conception of a scene. This is important because Dance Like a Man alternates between past and present events.

With all his brilliant qualities, ripe scholarship and clear visualizing power and with his artistic perception, Dattani’s Dance Like A Man leaves in reader’s minds a very vivid and long lasting impression. He constructs his plots from his own materials.

Dattani’s language is simple, lucid and realistic. His characters, sometimes, use words from regional languages. The words like nritya, abhinaya, abhitiaya etc. are used. By using, words from regional language, which is known as pidgin, he proves himself to be a realist. Native words, terminology of Bharatnatyam and English expressions are mixed in a very natural way.

From a retrospect of what has been said, it may safely be deducted that Dattani’s Dance Like a Man embodies the theme of clash
between the tradition and the modernity along with issues of gender, marriage and career in a very interesting and artistic manner and display some wonderful qualities of its author which makes Dattani writer of world stature.

The theme of clash between tradition and modernity has already been assessed by a number of authors, but Dattani has provided a variety and vividness to this theme. *Dance Like a Man* has been hailed as wonderful and engrossing play. The play displays its deep concern for family harmony and approach for a social reformation, which makes it a unique piece of art. The play ends with a compromising tone. They survive by making compromise with their revolutionary and rebellious spirit. The play ends with following memorable words:

“We were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God.” (CP: 447)

Jairaj and Ratna realized the futility and limitations as human beings. They realize that they lack the grace and brilliance because they are human beings. They also realize their past mistakes and limitations. They dance together with a remarkable change of heart and develop better understanding. There is an overwhelming passion and ambition for the dance in Jairaj and Ratna throughout the play though they didn’t achieve the laurels as dancers. The final words lend a unique touch to the play. It brings reconciliation of the conflict and resentment they underwent throughout the lives. It is observed:

It is state of the elevation of human consciousness that wraps the distinction of male and female into a state of ‘wholeness’, corresponding with the rhythm of life. In his self discovery, Jairaj discovers the divine essence of human self that is neither male nor female. \(^{11}\)

In the play, there is fine juxtaposition between past and present, individual self and collective self. Here the dramatist appears to be attempting
midway between theatrical and narrative device. The play depicts man’s desire and perpetual conflict resulting from man’s longing and ways of destiny. What constitutes the theatrical structure of the play is constant conflict between the individual self with society, conventions and traditions of the family. The shifts and movements of the play are very corresponding with the technique of stream of consciousness. This device helps the dramatist to present the grotesque and fragmental pictures of life. Little Dubey observes in the following way:

> It is beautifully crafted the way it moves back and forth in time, its use of one actor to play more than one role which really tests the actors talent, makes it as unique as does the strong characterization and the ‘seamless’ movement in time. \(^\text{12}\)

Literature suggests; it doesn’t state. A good work of art has rich suggestive feature. The play *Dance Like a Man* has psycho-philosophical implications and suggestions. The message is encoded in the page by the dramatist, but it is decoded by the stage production of the play. The vivacity of dialogues and performance enables the dramatist unfold his story in an effective and appealing manner. It is observed:

> The play *Dance Like a Man* begins with a socio cultural spectrum, passes through psycho-cultural dynamics and culminates in psycho-philosophical suggestiveness and here lies the strength and distinction of Dattani’s art. \(^\text{13}\)

Identity crisis is oft repeated idea in the plays of Dattani. In the present play, he dramatizes the identity crisis in the life Jairaj Parekh, a dancer. It is identical that he has to shape and reshape his personality in accordance with the ideas and expectations of other people. Amritlal Parekh, his father, is very conservative and rigid person. He has his own notions and ideology, which he imposes upon Jairaj who protests, but Jairaj fails and yields to the desires and dreams of his father and also of his wife. In fact, he
knows what he wants to be, but his father wants him to shape his personality in his own way. He thinks that Jairaj is not growing as a man. So, Amritlal wants Jairaj, as adult, and asks Ratna to help him in the process.

Amritlal: Help me make him an adult. Help me to help him. Grow up.

Ratna: How?

Pause.

Amritlal: It is hard for me to explain. I leave it to you. Help me and I’ll never present you from dancing. I know it will take time but it must be done.

Ratna: I will try. (CP: 427)

The play also discusses theme of the established and accepted mores and manners of the society. The dramatist has shown Jairaj as a bharatnatyam dancer, his father’s objection to this, and his wife’s league with her father-in-law for saving her own freedom, for continuing her own practices as a dancer.

The character of Ratna is quite different from Jairaj who suffers the most in the drama and feels isolated in drama. Ratna joins hands with Amritlal for growing Jairaj for nurturing her motives. She embeds her own dreams and desires in Lata. She identifies herself with Lata and derives satisfaction. After reading rare review of Lata in a newspaper, she says;

Ratna, (shouting) I heard. Rave reviews! The star of the festival critics. My hard work has paid off, hasn’t it? Hasn’t it? (Takes the papers and makes for the bedroom) (CP: 439)

The patriarchal hegemony and post colonial dichotomy is highlighted through the clash between Jairaj & Amritlal. Individual identities and choices are denied under the power of patriarchy and also of wealth. Amritlal claims himself as the man of liberal minded ideology, but he is not
man of progressive ideology in true sense of term. That’s why Jairaj tells truth on his face;

Jairaj: Don’t pretend. It suited your image- that of a liberal minded person -to have a daughter-in-law from outside your community. (CP: 415)

Many of Dattani’s plays explore the idea of liberal mindedness. He has exposed so called liberal minded people in his plays. Mithran Devanesen inquires:

Are we the liberal-minded persons we would like to believe that we are or do we blindly kowtow to unwritten laws of family conduct that is the easier path to take? 14

Family name and social recognition are the chief concerns for Amritlal Parekh, but for Jairaj, they are the obstacle in carving his self-identity. He yields but doesn’t kill his own desire. He craves for self identity and self esteem. Colonial sensibility and social commitment doesn’t give way to his self-desire and dreams.

Jairaj suffers in two ways. Firstly, patriarchal power suppresses his desires and dreams. Secondly, social prejudice also causes turmoil and suffering in the life of Jairaj. So, his self is divided and pride is wounded. He is anguished and depressed. Critically speaking, the play is a tragedy of human soul. Jairaj’s soul falls to pieces. He is constantly shown at war. The shift in past shows his clash with his father and in present, he is struggling to adjust with his wife. He expresses his grievances against his father and wife. In the later part of the play, he outbursts his grievances towards his wife in the following terms.

Jairaj: I want you to give me back my self-esteem!

Ratna: When did I ever take it?
Jairaj: Bit by bit. You took it when you insisted on top billing in all our programmes. You took it when you made me dance my weakest items. You took it when you arranged the lighting so that I was literally dancing in your shadow. And when you called me names in front of other people. Names I feel ashamed to repeat even in private. And you call me disgusting. (CP:443)

The play focuses on the successes and failures of the three generations in the play – Amritlal Parekh, Jairaj and Ratna, and Lata. The play highlighted socio-cultural as well as socio psychological conflicts. Post colonial analysis of the play reveals that one has to fight back to the social prejudice and traditions. Otherwise one will undergo perpetual suffering and subjugation. In the words of A. Nicoll,

Many modern tragedies depend not on certain personalities presented in isolated surroundings, but on individuals placed in the midst of social powers from which they derive their joys and sorrows.  

There are anxiety and tension prevailing in the minds of characters. The characters are not cheerful and in joyous mood except Viswas who is helping his father in family business. Out of the four living characters, the three Jairaj, Ratna and Lata are the artists, bharatnatyam dancers. They are caught up in anxiety and tensions. The close study of the play reveals that they are facing competition in the field. The two things which create an air of tension and suspense are rivalry among the artists and hostility of the society towards business of art and dance. They are seen struggling to build their career under the competitive scenario and hostile surroundings. Like his many other plays, Dattani also introduces theme of gender identity in this play. The play describes the actions and reactions against the act of trespassing the prescribed and accepted gender roles. Jairaj jumps over to bharatnatyam dance which is generally, performed by
women. Rejecting his father’s objection to this dance form, Jairaj takes different path landing himself in great difficulty.

Dance is a mode of aesthetic expression among the people residing in Chennai. The setting of the play is Chennai, the abode of dancers.

In a city like Chennai, where everyone knows dancer or has a dancer in the family, Dance Like a Man was bound to strike a familiar chord. The challenge to both my actors and myself as director was not just to bring the issues the play raises to the fore but also to bridge Dattani’s verbal ingenuity with a strong visual element.  

The play shows how patriarchal social set up deprives the other members of the families from being celebrity as a dancer. Ratna couldn’t be a famous dancer under the patriarchal powers exercised by her father-in-law. Dattani seems to assert that individual talent can never flourish under the domination of patriarchal family system. Ratna thwarts in her dream of being celebrity. After the death of Amritlal Parekh, her daughter Lata has become an excellent star of bharatnatyam.

Dattani’s theatrical art is characterized by a fine combination of ‘feeling and form’. It is because of this trademark dramatic quality Dattani emerges as the dramatist of the international repute. In the play Dance Like a Man, he also muses over a issue what constitutes a man? The father Amritlal Parekh wants his son Jairaj grow as an adult, a normal man. He, therefore, objects his son’s involvement in bharatnatyam and his intention of growing long hair. On the contrary to this, the son wants to carve his own identity; he wants to shape his personality according to his own fancy and desires. The society has its own norms abiding to all the members of society, but the post colonial Indian young generation objects to the accepted norms and chooses the course of action at their own inviting conflict and struggle. The present play depicts this postcolonial conflict in a very effective manner.
The play shows how social prejudices and conditions hinder the individuals’ choices and deprive them from the path of possible growth and development. Through the example of *devadasi*, Chenni Amma, Dattani tries to explain how biased society fails to respond to the call of humanity and acknowledgement of the true art.

Dattani doesn’t promote direct didacticism through theatre. He adopts theatre as the medium of reflection of what one observes. He puts: “Theatre to me is a reflection of what you observe. To do anything more would be to become didactic and then it ceases to be theatre.”

Hence, Dattani intends not to sermonize; not to enter into the page of the play. He has superb art and craft which help him handling his observation in a more realistic and impartial way.

It is common knowledge to put that there are two things common to all his plays: the family unit and urban milieu. He is quite familiar with urban environment. Family is the epicenter in his drama. Most of the upheavals and shocks occur within the range of familial relationship. Clash between tradition and modernity, divorce, problem of career and marriage, child sexual abuse, prostitution, extra marital relationship, problems of hijras, even communal tension are connected and covered within the range of family landscape. In the play *Dance Like a Man*, Dattani examines interpersonal human relationship within the range of familial territory.

*location within the dynamics of a preexisting structure of the contemporary urban Indian family which then turns into the site of the ensuing*

*Dance Like a Man*, a master piece of Dattani, deals with the host of issues like problem of marriage and career, conflict between the tradition and modernity, patriarchal domination, plight of *devdasi*, gender roles etc.
In India, literature of all languages have penned down the pathetic plight of women. And thereby have raised voices against this inhumane treatment to women. Indian writing in English is no exception to this. One thing should be noted here that feminism has got mixed responses from all over the world. Feminism has given birth to two opposite attitudes namely pro-feministic and anti-feministic attitude. The writers who possess favorable attitude towards feminism are called pro-feminist and those who oppose this attitude are designated as anti-feministic. Mahesh Dattani belongs to the former category i.e. the writer with the pro-feministic attitude.

So far Mahesh Dattani’s perception of women is concerned, it is quite unconventional. In fact, he has no specific agenda of feminism to pass on viewers. He tries to discover different facets of feminine psyche. His works depict the constant battle between the feminine psyche and patriarchal order. To the question, asked by Laxmi Subramanyam, Dattani replies:

They are humans. They want something. They face obstacles. They will do anything in their power to get it. All eyes focus on in the powerlessness of sensibility for political correctness either. My only defense is to say that I am not biased against woman.  

*Tara* is the most touching three-act stage play by Dattani. It presents a tale of Siamese twins namely Tara and Chandan. The play oscillates between the past and the present events. Most of the plays of Dattani have family and home as the locale. So is the case with *Tara*. The play *Tara*, directed by Dattani himself, was first performed as *Twinkle Tara* at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore, on 23rd October, 1990 by Playpen Performing Arts Group, which is established by Dattani. It was performed under the directorship of Alyque Padamsee. It was, later on, staged as *Tara* at Sophia Bhabha Hall by Theatre Group. Bombay, on 9th November, 1991.
Multilevel sets, split scenes, flashback device, double roles etc. are the noted theatrical techniques of Mahesh Dattani. In this play, the stage is consisted of multilevel sets. The lowest level occupies a major portion of the stage. It represents the house of the Patels. The next level represents the bedsitter of the older Chandan in a suburb of London. This is the only realistic level. At the higher level, Dr. Thakkar remains seated in the chair throughout the play. He is not watcher of the action of the play, but his association is shown by his sheer God like presence. Dan has a triangular task to perform. He is the narrator, organizer of the action and also participant character in the play. Among the three levels, Dan’s level is only the realistic level. The action moves out from his memory. It can be said that it is the remix version of past event happened at Patel household. The play has a very constructive nature of narrative as usual in his plays, breaking and restarting action.

Dan is the second name of Chandan. He has changed his name Chandan to Dan to free himself from the burden of injustice done to Tara, his sister. He goes to London and tries his hand at writing. He cuts off his relation with others. He tries to live in the new world. The idea that he is responsible for pathetic position of Tara constantly haunts his inner consciousness. She is another half of him. She is the separated self of him. Sense of guilt grips his conscience. Erin Mee aptly puts, “Tara and Chandan are two sides of the same self.” (CP: 320)

At the beginning of the play, the spot light picks up Dan (older Chandan) at his writing table. He is typing furiously. He stops and looks up and speaks directly to the audience.

Dan:

seedy suburb of London, thousands of miles from home hasn’t put enough distance between us. (Holds up his glass.) My battery charger helps on some occasions. But now I want them to comeback. To masticate my memories in my mind and spit out the result to the

(CP: 323-24)
Dan is writing a play in two acts- *Twinkle Tara*, but he can’t write except publication details. He wrote a short story entitled *Random Raj* dealing with the theme of British Raj. The publishers have turned it down as they didn’t find it worth publishing. The play begins without any music, but slowly music fades in and Chandan and Tara walk onto the stage level. They both have a limp, but on different legs. Bharati offers more milk to Tara as she has lost half a pound weight in one week.

He is writing a drama on Tara. There is an exchange of hot words between Bharati and her husband over the issue of love and care of their children. Patel blames on Bharati that she is turning children against him. He is giving love and affection in equal amount to both the children. His wife wants to prove that she loves Tara more than him. The second act ends with collapse of Tara’s health and Patel’s asking for sugar. At the end, Dan reads his script:

(reads aloud) Bharati sobs. Patel brings in the revived Tara. Patel picks up the phone and dials the hospital. The act ends with the explosive opening of Brahms’ ‘First concerto’. (CP: 354)

Tara and Chandan are Siamese twins. Though they are twins, they don’t resemble same. They are separated after the three months of their birth. Actually, they were conjoined from the chest and were having three legs. The chances of survival of the third leg were more with of Tara. However, it was given to Chandan, avoiding medical report, which reflects gender discrimination. In fact, the decision to give third leg to Chandan was taken by Mrs. Bharati Patel and her politically powerful father. Mr. Patel had no hand in this injustice. The surgery was done in Bombay. Thus, Tara is the victim of sex discrimination in patriarchal society. It is an unpleasant fact that a woman’s life is always structured and governed by patriarchy since time immemorial. Dattani seems to assert that the power of wealth often joins hands with power of patriarchy for the subjugation and oppression of the women in our society. Tara’s grandfather uses his political and money power to convince the doctor for giving third leg to Chandan instead of Tara.
Critically, trinity of patriarchy, capitalism, and political power join forces together against the existence of a girl. It has been attributed:

Tara centers on the emotional separation that grows between two conjoined twins following the discovery that their physical separation was manipulated by their mother and grandfather to favour the boy (Chandan) over the girl (Tara). Tara, a feisty girl who isn’t given the opportunities given to her brother (although she may be smarter) eventually wastes away and dies. Chandan escapes to London, changes his name to Dan, and attempts to repress the guilt he feels over his sister’s death by living without a personal history.  

The play is highly theatrical. Spotlight picks up Bharati and Tara. Bharati is showing her deep love and affection for Tara.

Bharati: Tara! My beautiful baby! You are my most beautiful baby! I love you very much!

Tara: (enjoying this affection) Yes, mummy. I know that (CP: 355)

Even by the end of the play, Dan couldn’t materialize anything on his drama. Still there are his name, address and date nothing else. He admits that nothing has changed except date. He says; “The material is there. But the craft is yet to come. Like the amazing Dr. Thakkar, I must take something from Tara-and give it to myself. Make capital of my trauma, my"

The play Tara provides bitter commentary upon gender discrimination and forces of social apathy towards injustice done to even a girl babe under the cloak of gender dichotomy. So it is not just a story about gender identity nor is it a story of medical phenomenon. It presents how women are marginalized to the extent of distorting her self. The play is, in
broader sense, a gruesome tale of injustice done to a woman by the patriarchal society. Despite the civilization and development in the human field, we are same at the root of our mind. The play shows how the devil of gender discrimination kills all other bond of familial relationship and how socio-cultural myths and conventions control and construct the course of the human life. Bharati’s love for Tara is pure and unceasing, but her maternal love is marginalized as a woman and her subleternity compels her to sacrifice her maternal love to cope up with social expectations. The patriarchal code pushes mother-daughter relationship on the periphery. Adrienne Rich aptly observes:

Though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males. This glorious motherhood is imposed on women, conditions her entire life. 21

In this play, Dattani highlights the complex situation in which conjoined twins are trapped by Nature. The manipulation, made by the patriarchal society, creates the situation more complex and intricate. It brings forth the very unhappy and absurd situation for a girl, Tara. It is attributed:

Dattani establishes that mother and daughter relationship is ultimately subordinated to the directives of patriarchy. It makes obvious that women’s lives are organized and manipulated by the patriarchy in all ages, all culture and all countries by establishing values, roles, gender perception and prescribe unequal means to achieve the ‘wholeness’ for women. 22

The play revolves around the theme of favoring the boy and frowning upon the girl with exceptional originality of conception. Mahesh Dattani, in one of his interviews with Laxmi Subramanyam, says:
I see Tara as a play about the male self and female self. The male self is being preferred in all cultures. The play is about the separation of self and the resultant angst.  

Dan is the interviewer at this juncture of action. Dr. Takhar holds forth proudly on his God-like intervention in the lives of Tara and Chandan. He does it directly addressing to the audience. Dan receives a phone call from his father who is at present in India. Through this call, he comes to know about the sad demise of his mother, Bharati. This enables us to perceive his mental and emotional turmoil. He does great efforts to keep distance between him and India and the past as possible. Nevertheless, the past is within, just as the present. Tara is an exploration of the dark secrets of human consciousness that creates tension and emotional turmoil in the present. Pressure of the past is the characteristic feature of Dattani’s play. We find various revelations in his plays. Dattani unearths what lies beneath surface, what had happened in the past days, and how it affects the present action. So, the audience comes across with unexpected intrickation.

Tara is revelatory in nature. Dan feels the pressure of the past. He is weighed down with the pressurable tension resulting from past deeds. They are of his mother and grandfather. At the time of the gruesome decision of giving third leg to Chandan, the doctors opined that chances of survival of leg were more with Tara than Chandan. Gender hierarchisation comes in the way of science. Bharati and her politically powerful father without taking Mr. Patel in confidence decided to give the third leg to Chandan. The doctor was persuaded by giving some acres of land in Bangalore by Bharati’s MLA father. As Patel explains “A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl.” (CP: 378)

The leg with Chandan could survive only for two days, while it could have survived forever with Tara. It doesn’t mean that Mr. Patel is devoid of fault. He is also a party to gender discrimination. He appears to be more concerned about the future of Chandan than Tara.
Bharati’s excessive love for Tara results from her past guilt. She feels the pangs of her past guilt. She, allied with her father, did great injustice to Tara. Now she wants to give more and more love and comforts to Tara. It is because of this that she wants to give her own kidney to Tara when there is another donator available. She wants to give part of herself and craves satisfaction out of this. She shows her concern to the extent that she and only she loves Tara. Nobody else! But Patel disapproves her idea of giving her kidney to Tara. So, she pretends that it will involve expenses. Mr. Patel disapproves her view saying that her father’s wealth has always been her strength against him.

Bharati: (pleadingly) Why won’t you let me do it?

Patel: (controlling) Need I tell you? Because I do not want you to have the satisfaction of doing it.

Bharati: I will do it!

Patel: You will have to obey me. It’s my turn now.

Bharati: I want to give her a part of me! (CP: 344)

Bharati tries to assert her moral superiority over her husband. She struggles hard to carve out her space in the family. Bharati’s final decision of giving her kidney to Tara may be seen as an act of expiation. Bharati said that her deceased father is responsible for the inhuman act of denying third leg to Tara. After her father’s death, Bharati’s condition grows worse. She tries to make up through taking excessive care and immense exposure of her love for Tara and great concern for her future. This is also the result of her past grave blunder. She is quite conscious of her past wrong deed and feels full pressure of her guilt. Her efforts to compensate loss, caused to Tara by her, causes conflict with her husband and this ultimately leads her to the mental breakdown. Thus, Bharati keeps striving to construct her maternal love until she undergoes mental breakdown.
Bharati is being hospitalized. Tara wants to see her personally, but her father doesn’t allow her to do so. Hence, she begins to hate him thinking Bharati wants to tell her something concerning her father. Hence, Mr. Patel discloses the truth before Tara and Chandan.

the girl. Your grandfather and your mother had a private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. I wasn’t asked to come. That same evening, your mother told me of her decision. Everything will be done as planned. Except- I couldn’t believe what she told me- that they

n’t take them very long
to realize what a grave mistake they made. The leg was –I was meaning to tell you both when you were

(CP: 378)

It is necessary to pinpoint that we find a kind of change in Bharati’s view especially about patriarchal notion. She feels disillusioned. What about Patel? He still nurtures the patriarchal ideology. He bothers much about Chandan’s future career. He doesn’t seem too much bother about Tara’s future career. Besides gender discrimination, the play offers a study of psycho-philosophical dimension integrated in the text. The play ends with Dan’s apology:

wish. I wish that a long forgotten person would forgive me. Wherever she is. (CP: 380)

Dan receives acute pain and develops psychological trauma. The play also can be deemed as the tragedy of human self. Dan realizes wretchedness and misery of his existence which is the outcome of the crime done to Tara .His soul is aching. It has come closer to the observation of Beena Agarwal:
The pathetic confession of Dan by the end of the play “forgives me Tara, forgive me, for making it my tragedy” is the manifestation of Dattani’s own anguish at the exploitation of an innocent girl.  

There is an unprecedented development in the field of science and technology. It has blessed mankind with speed, pleasure and perfection. If we look at the other side of coin, we shall come to know that it is also used to cause suffering and pain in the lives of many people. After all, it is the man who operates the machine for his own motives and desires. The play Tara shows us how technologically enhanced equipments are used to subjugate the woman. Dattani establishes that it is not machine, but human motives that matter much. Dattani holds red torch against pitfalls of advancement of science and technology.

Dattani takes a rational look at theatrical tradition of home and abroad. Considering his necessity, he fuses western theatrical devices with the native one. He freely uses words and sentences of Indian languages like Gujarati, Hindi and Kannada in his dramas. Since his mother tongue is Gujarati, he is fond of using Gujarati words and sentences. In Tara, he uses code mixing device. Roopa speaks Gujarati words frequently. As she says: “Prema! Prema-a (No response.) Prema-a! Oh, hello, aunty. (In broken Gujarati) Kem Chcho? Majhjha ma...?” (CP: 327)

Mahesh Dattani shows how the women are gasping under the evil clutch of patriarchy and gender bias. To build premise of strong and unshakable nation, sound construction of family is very necessary as it is like the brick in the premise of the nation. Moreover, family is our first society. If this first community or society exists on falsehood of prejudice and conventions, the nation, the larger society, cannot survive longer, cannot flourish and progress. It is observed:

Mahesh Dattani frequently takes as his subject the complicated dynamics of the modern urban family. His characters struggle for some kind of
freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender, and repressed desire. Their dramas are played out on multi-level sets where interior and exterior become one, and geographical locations are collapsed – in short, his settings are as fragmented as the families who inhabit them.  

The play also indicates that the patriarchal social set up also deprives women from gaining economical stability. Along with the tragic tale of gender discrimination, an unpleasant document of material discrimination against the woman folk is also woven in the fabric of the text of the play. Since, Bharati was the only child of her father; he has bequeathed Tara and Chandan with house in Bangalore. However, Tara is excluded from the bequest of money by the grandfather. Chandan inherits a lot of money.

The theme of separation also prevails in various forms. There are mainly two kinds of separation. One separation is of Tara and Chandan through surgery of unjustly giving third leg to Chandan. The second is Mr. Patel’s boycott by his family. Mr. Patel, a Gujarati, has married Bharati, a Kannadiga. So, his family has cut off relationship with him. The root cause of both these separations lies in social prejudices and conventions. Through his plays, Dattani encourages the demolition of false prejudice and conventions which beset the lives of human beings with pain and misery. It is observed:

> Woven into the play are the issues of class and community, and the clash between traditional and modern life styles and values.

Dattani dramatizes the angst of the urban family. There is a sense of unrest among the members of Patel family in the play. Tara and Chandan are subjected to physical deformity, whereas Mrs. Bharati Patel is suffering from the disease of hysteria. There is no familial concord between husband and wife. Some unrevealed mysteries cast their dark shadows upon their lives. It has been assumed:
This is thus a play about the injustices done in the name of construction of gender identities – this hierarchisation and demarcation of roles does as much harm to men as to women. Dan carries as much harm of the unfair burden this imposes as Tara. 27

*Bravely Fought the Queen* is a famous stage play dealing with confined domestic space of the women and their seeking consolation in their own ways. It depicts the theme of emptiness of lives caught up in the swirl of capitalism. Fissured into the three acts, the play showcases certain ugly and harsh reality of our so called normal life. Dattani is adept at fusing form and influence for creating a ‘space’. Michael Walling observes:

His plays fuse the physical and special awareness of the Indian theatre with the textual rigour of western models like Ibsen and Tennessee.

Britain both have an urgent need for a cultural expression of the contemporary; they require public spaces in which the mingling of eastern western influences can take place. Through his fusion of forms and influences, Mahesh creates such a space. This is in itself a political and social statement of astonishing force. 28

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* was first performed at the Sophia Bhava Hall, Mumbai on 2nd August, 1991. The play was, subsequently, produced by Border Crossing, UK, in 1996. Michael Walling and Mahesh Dattani directed the stage production of the play. In the plays of Dattani multi-level stage plays a vital role. It helps in connecting the past with present and also contains certain symbols which indicate inner workings of the minds of the characters.
Every act is named as per the gender of the characters present therein. The act one is named as “The Women”. It speaks volume of women. It presents the emptiness and trauma in the lives of women of the Trivedi house hold and others. The act two is entitled as “The Men”. The two things that remains unchanged in the act two are- Baa’s room and well stocked bar. Jiten and Nitin runs advertising agency. There are two large desks with executive chairs for Trivedi Brothers and a smaller desk for Shridhar who is working in their office. There is a comfortable couch next to Jiten’s desk. They are working for ReVa Tee campaign.

The third act is named as “Free for All”. The setting is same as in act one. Thumri also continues to play in the third act as in act one. The title of the third act is very symbolic and suggestive. There is a free flow of emotions and passion, anger and hatred, blaming and counter blaming. The women express, assert, and move freely in this act. Dattani presents a kind of familial court in which contention and counter contention takes place till the truth is revealed. The Trivedi brothers are dismissed as the scheming and gay, violent and unfaithful. The dramatist disproves the idea of varied spaces for man and woman showing them human beings equal in all respects.

At the opening of the play, Lalitha comes to Dolly’s house as suggested by latter’s husband. Dolly has awful memory. She has forgotten whose wife Lalitha was. She met her at the parties. But she didn’t remember that her husband’s name is Sridhar who works for Dolly’s husband and handles ReVa Tee account. After sometime, we come to know about ‘Baa’, Dolly’s mother in-law and mother of Jiten and Nitin. Her room is upstairs. She calls Dolly by pressing the bell again and again. Her character creates some kind of tension and an air of authority in the house. There is also reference regarding Dolly’s daughter Daksha who never appears physically in the play. Her presence is felt throughout the play. It reminds us the past cruelty of Jiten with his wife Dolly.

Thereafter, Alka enters into Dolly’s house. She is both sister and sister-in-law to Dolly as both have married in the same family - the Trivedis.
Dolly has married to Jiten Trivedi and her sister Alka has married to Jiten's brother Nitin. Alka is a few years younger to her sister. Trivedi brothers have twin houses side by side—one for each brother in a posh suburb of Bangalore. Thus, both sisters live right next door. Dolly’s daughter Daksha is a school going girl. She goes to a school in Ooty.

In a sense, play deals with the theme of hypocrisy. The close look at the house will reveal that living room is face and kitchen and Baa’s bedroom etc. are the back or inwards reality. The spectators are curious to peep inside the kitchen and inner rooms where real incidents take place. The playing of thumri of Naina Devi pervades right from the beginning to the end of the play. It has also got very symbolic significance. Naina Devi was a great queen, but she loved to sing thumri which was practiced by the whore. She had strong urge for singing love songs and resistant will. She followed her urge and passion without caring for the social criticism. With the support of her husband, she sang in the face of patriarchal dominating society. She was mistaken as for a twaif. Eventually, she is recognized as the queen of thumri. Dolly also wants to be dressed in whore at the ball like Naina Devi, a paradigm of heroism. The title of the play is used in an ironic way showing domestic struggle of the women of the Trivedi family. There is a popular poem in Hindi about Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, a valorous queen. She fought against the Britishers. Through this inset story, the dramatist focuses women’s craving for love and freedom and the struggle they underwent in the play.

Lalitha:

Alka: (interested) ‘Jhansi Ki Rani’

Lalitha: Yes, but how did it go? (Remembers and recites) We’d heard her praises sung so often.

So bravely fought the Rani of Jhansi.
So, Lalitha suggests Dolly to dress up herself as the Rani of Jhansi, a brave queen. But Alka is more inclined at this suggestion and wants to join dressing herself as a brave queen.

Baa, who has the stroke, is in her late sixties. She is bed-ridden. She wears white sari. Her husband was very violent person. She had been ill-treated by him. The memory of violent husband is still alive. Two things are harassing to Alka and Dolly—the bell and Baa’s loud mouth.

The play seeks to presents women’s exploitation by the male. Alka is ill treated by her husband and by her own brother, Praful. She pours out her rage and resentment in the following terms:

…I can’t forget what they did to me! Our brother is a cheat! He lied about our father to them. And he lied to me! He lied to me (CP: 256)

Alka narrates past painful treatment meted out to her by Praful. Once, Alka came home on scooter of a neighbor’s son. Annoyed by this, Praful dragged her into the kitchen without saying a word. He pushed her face in front of burning stove and burnt her hair. Despite his brutality, Dolly considers Praful as a very ideal person. It is learnt that Praful and Nitin were close friends since college days. Nitin also treated her badly by driving out of house for some time.

There is a mystery regarding an old woman. There are many references of coming old woman again and again. Whenever she comes, they talk to wake up the watchman; the watchman is so sleepy that he wakes only when he hears horns of his sahib’s car.

The play also highlights romantic story of Dolly and Kanhaiya, a teenager. Alka, in the presence of Lalitha, narrates the love-scene between Dolly and Kanhaiya in association with Naina Devi’s thumri. It is quite shocking and humorous that Dolly is also interested in listening to the narration of her romance with Kanhaiya. She feels joy and embarrassment at
the same time. Actually, interpolated tale of Kanhaiya, alluring cook who might or might not present also functions as the potent symbol which denotes disappointment emptiness and trauma in the women of the Trivedi house hold. Alka and Lalitha have drunk excessively. Alka keeps on speaking under the influence of intoxication. How women behave when they are alone and guarded. Act one ends in tension able calling of Baa for Dolly and Dolly’s joyous calling for Kanhaiya.

Act–II (The Men) presents men’s business and world outside. The Trivedi brothers are having financial agency and Shridhar is working with them. There is a discussion on market survey for ReVa Tee advertisement made by Shridhar. The model is alright, but they have failed to understand women’s desire. Reva Tee advertisement is pregnant with meaning. It is very suggestive and symbolic. The failure of ReVa Tee advertisement symbolizes that the men have failed to understand and recognize the feminine self and equity as human being. Dissatisfied with result of the ReVa Tee survey, Shridhar wants to make another presentation, but Jiten opposes the idea, calling it a great campaign. He says that they are of the women’s opinions. They have little weight in the marketing world as they don’t have buying power.

Jiten: Screw the survey! You know who you should have tested it out on? Men!

Shridhar: Men!

Jiten: Yes! Men would want to buy it for their women! That’s our market. Men would want their women dressed up like that. And they have the buying power. Yes! So there’s no point in asking a group of screwed-up women what they think of it. They’ll pretend to feel offended and say, ‘oh, we are always being treated like sex objects’. (CP: 276)
Thus, Jiten doesn’t respect views and opinions of women considering them as secondary human being or merely subordinate to their male counter parts.

The play is portrait of sexual, moral, and financial depreciation in the lives of the Trivedi brothers residing in a posh suburb of Bangalore. The play also shows how addiction of prostitution to the husband empties joy and happiness of conjugal relationship between husband and wife. Jiten and Shridhar are the pleasure seekers in prostitutions. They bring the outside women even at their office for gratifying the carnival desires. The comfortable couch is kept for this filthy purpose. As a result of this, their wives feel boredom and unhappiness in their marital lives. The play presents the shifting Indian values and dramatizes conflict between traditional and contemporary cultures.

The third act brings all men and women face to face. They are confronted and exposed to reality. In the third act, Jiten and Nitin come home to find Alka all wet and muddy as she has just danced in the rain and injured herself. Both are shocked to see her in an indecent look. Jiten stares at Alka and tells Nitin to ask her what she was doing outside in the rain.

Jiten: Ask her what she was doing outside in the rain.

Alka: I don’t know! I don’t know what I was doing outside. Aren’t there times when you don’t know what you are doing? (To Nitin) What’s the harm in that? Huh? (No response) Tell me. What’s the harm? (CP: 299-300)

Baa is now, aged and invalid. But the past ill memory of her husband is still fresh with her. She was brutally beaten up by her husband. He was a demon like person in both appearance and intention. Baa tells Lalitha: “Ten years old and he is afraid of the dark. Afraid to sleep in the dark. Afraid of his father - who is as black as night!” (CP: 272)

Further, Baa narrates the brutal behavior of her husband.
Baa: You hit me? I only speak the truth and you hit me? Go on. Hit me again. The children should see what a demon you are. Aah! Jitu! Nitin! Are you watching? See your father! (Jerks her face as if she’s been slapped.) No! No! Not on the face! What will the aaaaah! (Covers her face weakly as her scream turns silent and the light on her fades out). (CP: 278)

Jiten is like his father, violent and drunkard. He is very violent with his wife Dolly as his father was with his wife, Baa. He hit badly even when Dolly was pregnant.

Dolly: And you hit me! Jitu, you beat me up! I was carrying Daksha and you beat me up! (CP:311)

But Jiten blames Baa. He bit her as Baa’s provocation. She denied Daksha was their blood. She called Dolly a whore and Jitu believed her words. Baa puts blame on Praful. He lied to her. Dolly gives expression to her pent up pain and anguish at the end of the play to Jiten.

Dolly: Fifteen years ago. Hardly married for a year. Praful comes to visit us. The same day, your mother receives a letter from her cousin in Ahmedabad what fate! It had to be the same day! And it had to be the crucial month for me! What was in that letter? Our whole history. Including the portion which Praful hadn’t told you about. (CP: 311)

Neither of the brothers is willing to admit the guilt. They blame other. Jiten blames Baa. Baa blames Praful and other and Nitin blames upon Praful.

Jiten: (sobbing) No! No! (Points to Baa’s room) She made me do it! She did it!
Dolly: No! Oh no! I will not let you get away easily! They were your hands hitting me! Your feet kicking me! It’s in your blood! It’s in your blood to do bad! (CP: 312)

The play also exposes the male chauvinism and woman as the colonized subordinate section of male dominant Indian society. Baa and Dolly are the worst victims of the conventional and cruel attitude of their husbands. They are meted with injustice and ill treatment at the hands of their male counterparts. In Dattani’s play, battle is fought in the house. In this play, the house of Trivedi brothers seems to be the arena. In fact, female character of affluent homes raises their voices against the suppression and subjugation through patriarchal social system. The play also depicts the issue of homosexuality in a very bold manner. The play also throws light on the suffering of the wife due to her husband turning out to be a guy. Alka’s anguish and agony is aggravated when she comes to know that Nitin, her husband, has homosexual relationship with her own brother, Praful. She has become the victim of her own brother’s gay relationship. Her brother was having homosexual relationship with Nitin. Hence, he gets her sister married with his partner to continue his relationship in a smoother and longer way.

Alka retorts and pours her anger against her brother for making her scapegoat. Her wrath and anger is well expressed in the following outburst.

Alka: Our saint of a brother used to warm us against men like you. (Points to Jiten) And what does he do? The saint gives his sister to the sinister and disappears! (Makes a motion of wiping her hands) Finished. Matter over. Or is it? The saint has another sister who is (slaps her own face) bad, bad, bad. He beats her till she gets better. And he has this friend. A best friend! The sinister’s brother turns out to be his best friend. Not such a coincidence. (CP: 300)

The play *Bravely Fought the Queen* encompasses issue of gayism along with the main theme of exploitation of educated women in urban
society. On account of dry marital life, Alka has become a boozer. She has drunk heavily and lied on the sofa. Looking at her huddled figure, at the end of the play Nitin admits;

responded. Oh! But how ashamed he me feel after! He made me cry each time! That was a game he played. And I-I was whom? ... He told me that you knew. That he about me. And that it didn’t matter to you. You only wanted the

-I am sorry. It wasn’t my fault. (Moves to her and slowly covers her face with the blanket) But now, you will have to sleep. You mustn’t wake

(CP: 314-15)

Thus, the play ends with Nitin’s confessional soliloquy. He is anxious to meet dark auto driver. Dattani detects virgin issues and presents through his theatrical mechanism in an innovative fashion. The transexuality can be viewed in two ways. (i) Excluded (ii) not integrated. Gayism/lesbian are not integrated in the maincourse of our life. The eunuch is excluded from the man’s stream of our society.

The Trivedi brothers, Jiten and Nitin inflict pain and suffering upon their wives in two different ways. Jiten kicked Dolly in her belly during her pregnancy period and Nitin by avoiding his wife for his gayness. One more important thing about the Dattani’s plays is that his construction of love for the children comes from the past guilt. It is the pressure of past - mistake or crime that leads them to construct more and more love for kids so as to compensate their past loss. ‘Baa’, Praful, and Jiten did injustice to Daksha. Their excessive love for Daksha results from their past guilt. As Dolly says: “At the hospital, you told them I fell down stairs! Daksha was born-two months premature. With the cord around her neck! (Pause).I saw her and I knew! I knew instantly! Your mother loved her more than was natural. Praful loved
her. More than was natural. You love her. You love her more than Baa or Praful! Because you feel the most guilt!" (CP: 312)

Mahesh Dattani excels in art and craft as well as symbolic exuberances and imagery. The symbol is a powerful means of communication. In literary work, symbol has great value in the texture of work. The play is pregnant with lightly suggestive and effective symbols and imagery. Dattani has made ample use of symbols i.e. bonsai plant. He has woven it into the fabric of play. Lalitha has got obsession of growing bonsai. It is very suggestive of her internal world. The plant is slim and timy. It may get dried up if not timely watered and nurtured. It indicates that man should understand emotions and feeling of the woman. They should nurture their existence with love and respect. Otherwise, it brings dryness and emptiness in the life. She keeps on trimming and fencing of the plant. It denotes the restrictions imposed on the women in our society. Lalitha’s husband Surindhar keeps bonsai plant at his office. The plant is not healthy and attractive. It symbolizes the distorted images of the married lines of the Trivedi borther. Apart from this, the face mask, Baa’s bell and wheelchair, the thumri etc. art the imageries used for expressing some thoughts and idea in the play. The play Bravely Fought the Queen is moulded by craft of imagery or symbolism. The play repletes with rich symbols, imagery, rhythm, sound etc. The extensive use of bonsai plant reminds us the image of ‘broken tree’ which pervades throughout the play All My Sons by Arthur Miller.

In Bravely Fought the Queen, Dattani explores the marginalization of women and also their attempt to articulate their voices against the patriarchal politics that subjugates the women and makes them worth for nothing. The play can be considered as the dramatist’s protest against exploitation of women in terms of emotional and finance within the periphery of the familial relationship. The play also highlights other evils like money-lending, prostitution, domestic violence, consumerism etc. Though, the women of the play differ in their mood and musing, they are unhappy and disappointed at their ‘claustrophobic’ spaces. It is because of this depression and disappointment they are drifted towards different things for eliminating
dark-shadow of their frustration. Alka is addicted to wine and Dolly develops romantic notion for Kanhaiya. Lalitha’s over involvement in growing bonsai plant results from her frustrated mental state.

At the end, the women of the play become assertive and attempt to create their own spaces against the confined domestic space offered to them. Of course, they articulate their own spaces in different ways to discard their deplorable condition. Eventually, all men are unmasked and their real faces are brought before the audience. They have no other means of depending themselves except escapism. There is revolutionary change in the character of Dolly. Dolly of the first part of the play is quite submissive, meek and shy, but she emerges as an assertive and potent character who breaks through silence and burst out her anger against the ill-treatment and injustice done to her at the end. Alka also makes shocking rather disgusting revelation of hidden motives of her brother Praful who got her married with Nitin for continuing his gay relationship with Nitin.

By exploiting layer upon layer of performance, of unreality, Mahesh allowed his actress a route to emotion in its rawest form; the pain, the anguish in the blood-knot of the family which is his constant theme.²⁹

Dramatist highlights the collision between conventional mindset and modern culture resulting into newer landscape. The play depicts the emotional, financial and sexual complexities of Indian urban family. The women of the play are exploited in a multiple ways. It should be noted that they are not passive sufferers. They do suffer, but when it goes beyond endurance; they fight back to free themselves from the burden of subalternity. They take weapon in their hands to show that they are not only subordinate to their male counterparts. Alka is the fine example of this. She is the queen who bravely fought against the system of colonization i.e. patriarchal system just as Queen Lakshmibai fought valorously against the colonizers of the county. i.e. Britishers.
Mahesh Dattani, an internationally acclaimed author, is one of the first Indian dramatists in English to negotiate so successfully with audience at home and in abroad. His plays are written in urban backdrop and convey the authentic voice of modern urban India. He is one of the few brilliant starts in the constellation of Indian English theatrical firmament.

Dattani bags the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his wonderful work *Final Solutions and Other Plays*. *Final Solutions*, a stage play in three acts, is a thrilling story of gripping communalism. The time of the action is late 1940’s the period when the India got freedom and partition of the country on the basis of religion into India and Pakistan. Like in all other plays, Dattani has used segmented stage in this play and family as a battlefield of action. In Dattani’s plays, incident takes place in the streets and it brings horror home. Alyque Padamsee considers *Final Solutions* as the play about transferred resentments. He puts:

As I see it, this is a play about transferred resentments. About looking for a scapegoat to hit out at when we feel let down, humiliated. Talking out your own anger on your wife, children or servants is an old Indian custom.\(^{30}\)

The first stage production of the play took play at Guru Nanak Bhavan. Bangalore, on 10 July 1993. Later on, it was performed at Tara Theatre Mumbai on 11 December, 1993. It was directed by Alyque Padamsee. *Final Solutions* is a very celebrated work of art. Hence, it is also converted into Hindi by Shahid Anwar and directed by Arvind Gaur for Asmita Theatre in 1998.

The stage is dominated horse-shoe or crescent-shaped ramp, with the ends sloping to stage level. Most of the action of the Mob/Chorus takes place on the ramp. Within the confines of the ramp is a structure suggesting the house of the Gandhis with just wooden blocks for furniture and an upstage is a detailed kitchen and pooja rooms.
On another level, there is a room with a roll top desk and an oil lamp converted to an electric one, suggesting that the period is the late 1940s. During this period, Hardika was a young girl known as Daksha. Hardika should be positioned and lit in such a way that the entire action of the play is seen through her eyes. Daksha is referred to young girl of fifteen who writes her thoughts in diary. Hardika is referred to as the grandmother. Though Daksha and Hardika is the same person, they sometimes are seen working at the same level and same time.

When the play opens, Daksha is reading out what she has just written in her diary. Hardika is seated, motionless, on the same level. Daksha marries to Hari even before her 15th birthday. Her father had fought for freedom. She calls her mother-in-law as Gaju and father-in-law as Wagh for their certain personal traits. The introduction of Daksha’s character is very meaningful innovative attempt. Dattani creates her character for revitalizing the past especially through her diary. Dattani very tactfully provides her separate space and identity with a view to connecting the past with present. She analyses the past with present and provides her commentary.

Home is arena in the plays of Dattani. With the rise of action, the drama reaches to the Gandhi’s house. The actual action takes place outside the house, but it brings tension and terror inside the house. One can say that social tension or trouble assumes the form of domestic tension. Chased by the fanatic Hindu mob, Javed and Bobby sought refuge at Ramnik Gandhi’s house who is a man of liberal ideology. This incident sets forth thrilling actions of the play. Dattani presents the whole drama of the communal disharmony inside the Ramnik Gandhi’s house at Amargaon. He is the practicener of the democratic and liberal views. There was the communal trouble in the town. The communal riots break out due to the attack on rath yatra. The mobs are on the streets with weapons and burning fire. The communal flame engulfs the entire peace of the town. There is a chaos and confusion. Nobody knows what has exactly happened. Everybody is scared and panicky. The rumours of killing Pujari, bombing the Muslim girls’ hostel etc are at full speed. The dark night has enveloped the town with its fury and tension.
The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia. Each member of the mob is an individual yet they meld into one seething whole as soon as politicians play on their fears and anxieties.  

The play depicts juxtaposition joy of freedom and horrors of communal riots. Under the intoxication of religion, people became thirsty for the blood of their own country people. Killing, stabbing, setting fire, looting, rapping etc. were the common scenes during these period. Many were slaughtered and many more wounded. Thousands of people migrated from India to Pakistan and vice-versa. Even after the decades of the freedom, condition has not changed in terms of the religious prejudice and communal tension. “lurking inside ourselves.”

The play is bifurcated into three acts for the presentation of the events in a systematic way. Structurally, they can be considered as the exposition, climax and denouement or solution. The first act introduces the situation and people involved in it showing communal riots as the background of the play. There is a gradual development of action leading to the climax in the second act. The third act is very important from both structurally and philosophically. The dramatist presents cross examination Javed and Bobby for arriving at final solution of the communal hatred.

The first act serves as an exposition and sets forth action. All the personages are introduced in the first act. Ramnik Gandhi is the head of the family. His wife Aruna is a very religious natured lady. She is very punctual and takes meticulous care in daily rituals. Their daughter, Smita, is studying in college. She is holding different views regarding life, faith, religion etc. She symbolizes the liberal and humanitarian ideology. Hardika is the oldest character in the play. She feels that her son, Ramnik, is blinded by his ideals. The present communal trouble reminds Hardika of the past one in which her
father died. Her father was beaten on the streets of Hussainabad and died there during the post freedom communal trouble.

The play begins with Daksha’s diary reading to the audience and Hardika is seen seated rather motionless at the same level. She reads her diary. Daksha. (Reads from her diary) ‘Dear Diary today is the first time I have dared to put my thoughts on your pages. (Thinks for a while) Today? How will people know when “today” was a hundred years from now? (Picks up pen and scribbles.) 31 March, 1948

Through her reading, we come to know that she wanted to be a singer like voice queen Noor Jehan. She reads further, “All my dreams have

’s family is

(CP: 166) Daksha is a girl wife married to Hari before fifteen. She came to her new house at her fifteenth birthday after the ten month of her marriage. Her dreams were shattered as her in-laws heard her humming a love song to Hari one night and in the morning; they told Hari not to allow her to sing film songs. Thus, hers in laws forbade her to sing songs after her marriage. While recalling scarred memories of the communal riots after independence, Daksha writes; “Like last year, in August, a most

“(CP: 166)

Actually, people were very eagerly and enthusiastically waiting for the freedom. Everyone was awake for midnight just as the school goings wait for the last bell of the last class before vacation. But people rushed out screaming, shouting and fighting instead of enjoying and celebrating the declaration of freedom of the country and end of British regime.

Daksha’s father fought for freedom. He was happy as eventually India got freedom and rid of the Britishers. Daksha’s father said that before leaving India, Britishers let loose the dogs. But she didn’t understand it at that time. Her ancestral house was in Hussainabad. The house was attacked and her entire collection of records of Shamshad Begum, Noor Jehan, Suraiya were broken to pieces. Hardika opens her diary after forty years and writes a
dozen pages more. She observes “that things have not changed that much.” (CP: 167)

Dattani makes sensible theatrical tools befitting to the theme of his play. He is also innovative in both theme and stage craft. In this play, he exploits the old device of chorus in an interesting and innovative manner. There are two choruses each consists of five persons – one of Hindu and second being Muslim. The chorus enables us to know the inner thoughts and feelings of the Majority and the Minority. What is inside psyches of the people of both communities towards each other is revealed in a unique and interesting manner. The mob/chorus comprises of five men and ten masks on sticks. The players of mob/chorus wear a mask by holding the stick in front of him. There are five Hindus masks and five Muslim masks. The individuality of the chorus is revealed through chorus 1, chorus 2, etc. The players of the chorus wear Hindu masks. The social discord is expressed through their expressions.

Chorus 1: The procession has passed through these lanes
Every year,
For forty years!
Chorus 2, 3: How dare they?
Chorus 1, 2, 3: For forty years our chariot has moved though their mohallas.
Chorus 4,5: Why did they?
Why did they today?
Chorus 1: How dare they?
Chorus 2,3: They broke our rath.
They broke our chariot and felled our Gods!
Chorus 1,2,3: This is our land!

How dare they? (CP: 168)

There is concord and discord among the members of chorus. They agree sometime and disagree other time.

Chorus 1: It is in their blood!

Chorus 2, 3: It is in their blood to destroy!

Chorus 4: Why should they?

Chorus 5: It could have been an accident.

Chorus 2: The stone that hit our God was no accident!

Chorus 3: The knife that slit the poojari’s stomach was no accident!

Chorus 4, 5: Why should they? It could have been an accident. (CP: 168)

In this way, the members of the chorus continue to question and counter question. There is a split in their view. Chorus 4 and 5 hold the same view and Chorus 1, 2, 3 shares the common view. They build their parts to a crescendo ending on the word ‘accident’. A little later, they have on Muslim masks. So they become Muslim chous/mob.

Chorus1: Their chariot fell in our street!

Chorus2: Their God now prostrates before us!

Chorus 3: So they blame it on us?

Chorus 1: Was the chariot built by us?

Chorus 2, 3: Blame the builder of those fancy thrones.

Chorus 4: A manufacturing defect!
Chorus 5: Doesn't their God have a warranty?

A slow drumbeat. The chorus gathers.

Chorus All. We are neither idol-makers nor idol breakers!

Breaks away.

Chorus 5: But they blamed it on us!

Chorus All. Why did they? Why did they? Why?

Chorus 5: (emotionally) Why?

Pause.

Chorus 3: They say we razed their temples yesterday.

Chorus 2: That we broke their chariot today.

Chorus 1: That we’ll bomb their streets tomorrow.

Chorus All: Why would we? Why? Why? Why would we?

Chorus 5: (emotionally) Why would we?

Chorus 1,2,3 and 4 spit

Chorus: All EXCEPT 5. Let them send us back.

They turn to exit

Chorus 5: (meekly) where? (CP: 171)

In this way, they keep on speaking various utterances. At the end of this appearance, chorus 5 puts a very meek but a subtle question of where to go. The harmony and discord is explored through chorus.

Following the attack on rath yatra, the authority has imposed curfew and it is still on. So there is no exact idea about the happening and people died in it. Smita’s Muslim friend Tasneem is studying in college and
stays at Muslim girls’ hostel which is reported to be bombed, but no injury is known. Smita and Ramnik Gandhi talked on phone to Tasneem’s family at Jeevnagar and assured of no problem to Tasneem in the hostel.

Ramnik Gandhi:

each other. You see, my daughter is Taneem’s classmate

that is why we called-to tell you that. Colleges are closed and curfew hasn’t been lifted, so we assumed you might be worried about (CP: 170)

This riot reminds Hardika the past incident-attack on her house in the absence of her father. But this time scene is different. Unlike in Hussainabad, this time two Muslim boys took shelter at her house. They were chased and beaten by Hindu fantasist. Hardika sees wretched pride in their eyes. She is panicky as it would destroy her family again.

Aruna: Our Krishna will protect us.

Hardika: (Sharply) Be careful, I said! (Almost to herself) The dogs have been let loose. (exits) (CP: 174)

Faith in Lord Krishna expressed differently by Hardika and Aruna. The latter has much rather deep and unshakable faith in Lord Krishna and vice versa. As the lights fade on the ramp, two Mulsim boys named Javed and Bobby appeared and conformed to Hindu Mob. They enquired their names, business in the town etc. knowing them outstation Muslims. Mob. /chorus encircles them and two of the mob grab them from behind and snatch the watch of one of the young men. They were pushed and pulled, they were beaten severely. The mob search their pockets and wallets and find a bus ticket, a knotted handkerchief, a tiny prayer cap. The mob is enraged knowing their identity and say that they are of mouse to them.
Chorus All: You pray to a god, you do not know! You pray to a nothing. You do not know his form. And you seek to destroy our gods! Drive them out! Kill the sons of swine! Kill the sons of swine! (CP: 178)

Thus, the chorus gives a chase and strikes them behind the two men run crying in pain and reached to the door of Ramnik Gandhi’s house seeking shelter inside his house. They cry ‘Help us! Save us! For God’s sake, somebody save us!’ (CP: 179) Javed is finally beaten black and blue. These boys are begging for protecting them from the mad mob. They enter the house and Ramnik quickly shuts the door behind him. Now on words, entire drama takes place inside the Gandhi’s house. They introduce themselves as Javed and Bobby-two minority youths. Dattani attempts to explore the root causes of communal trouble. Reena Mitra observes:

Dattani’s *Final Solutions*, first staged in Bangalore in 1993, focuses on the problem communal disharmony between the Hindus and Muslims in India, especially during the period of the post partition riots. The analysis of the cause of friction between the two communities offered by Dattani carries conviction; as it is endorsed by a study of human psychology offering valid explanations of the proclivities and susceptibilities of individuals under circumstantial pressure. The psychosis that prevails among the Hindus as well as the Muslims in India after the events of partition of the country causes a chain of neurotic reactions to even the most inconsequential

After, Javed and Bobby-two minority youths have sheltered in Ramnik Gandhi’s house. The Gandhis have an animated discussion with the two young men.
On the outside of the Gandhi house, the chorus is yelling and asking for the two men. The chorus can be heard crying out, ‘Throw them out!’, ‘We’ll kill them!’ etc. (CP: 80)

Despite mad and frenzy crowd outside, he plays as a civilized host.

Chorus All: Throw them out! Give them to us. (CP: 180)

The chorus is pounding with their sticks on floor.

Chorus All: Why won’t you open the door?

Javed: (pleadingly to Ramnik). Please don’t! We beg of you.

Chorus All: Open up! Or we’ll break your door!

Ramnik: No! (CP: 181)

The Chorus has turned furious upon Ramnik for not handing over these two young boys. They call Ramnik a ‘traitor’.

Ramnik: I stand in front of the door. If you break the door, you will kill me.

Chorus: All. What? You protect them? Then you are a traitor! Traitor!

Sound of glass breaking. Aruna rushes to the image of Krishna.

Ramnik: Go away! Leave us alone!

Chorus All: Traitor! Traitor!

Ramnik: There is nothing you can take from here without killing me first!

Chorus All: Traitor! You are not one of us! We’ll kill you too! (CP: 181-82)

Despite the death knocking at his door, Ramnik displays a good deal of spirit of courage and patience. He is determined not to open the door and gives them in the hands of the fanatic mob to be killed. His wife also
insists him to open the door and take them. Aruna feels panicky and frightened to be killed by the mob.

The mob decides to wait outside. There is a lot of discussion between the Gandhis and two men. The first act ends with Smita’s arrival. To the much surprise of the family, Smita greets both the young boys by name. Her family is surprised at her acquaintance with these two men. The second act begins with Smita’s inquiry about her familiarity with the two refugees.

Smita: Why am I being asked all these questions? I recognize two boys (Pause. Points to Javed) This is Tasne Babban-Bobby- Tasneem’s fiancé. (CP: 189)

Bobby has completed college and Javed is a school drop-out. Ramnik Gandhi is confused because Javed’s father didn’t speak anything about Javed during his telephonic talk. So Javed explains that it is because of the fact that he doesn’t stay with his parents. A stone is hurled inside the house that reminds them the presence of mob outside.

Javed is a angry, proud and rebellious youth. Bobby is more meek and polite. Javed is influenced by religious fanaticism. He doesn’t live with his parents. Bobby’s real name is Babban, but his friend in college called him Baboon so he prefers Bobby to Baboon.

There is a discussion about feeling of being majority and minority. Despite the angry mob waiting outside, Ramnik plays the role of civilized host because he is from majority and he believes that peace is hidden inside the armpits of the majority.

Ramnik offers Javed a job in his sari shop in Kapda Bazaar. Smita denies employing him in the job as he can be hired by anyone. As per Smita’s narration, Javed is thrown out of his house. Smita (to Ramnik). They hire him! They hire such people!

Ramnik: They who?
Smita:

They bring him and many more to the city to create riots.

(CP: 195)

Bobby informs Smita that he had won him over. Smita is horrified at this truth. The word traitor is barely heard. It suggests that the angry mob is dispersing. The second act ends with the exposure of Javed’s real being. So he pounds his forehead with his fist out of frustration. The act three begins with the Muslim chorus. They sit with their legs folded under them in a prayer position.

Chorus 1: Should we be swallowed up? Till they cannot recognize us? Should we meld into anonymity so they can not hound us? Lose ourselves in a shapeless mass? Should we? Can we? (CP: 196)

The play also presents the problem how minority can be acceptable. Racial discrimination is quite visible in the manner Aruna and Hardika treat these two young boys. Aruna places two glasses of water before them. After they have drunk water, she holds the glasses with her thumbs and index fingers, on the sides which have not been touched by their lips. She takes them away and keeps them separate from the other glasses. Moreover, Ramnik is surprised to know that Javed is seeing his sister when he doesn’t live with his parents. As Javed replies to Ramnik Javed: (with malice). “We do love our own blood. Unlike you who treat your own like shit which can’t be touched.” (CP: 190). Javed criticizes caste discrimination existing in the Hindu community. He says that the caste-Hindus do not even touch the lower caste people.

As stated in the beginning, Dattani deals with the post modernistic issues. The conflict between tradition and modernity is well exemplified through the conflict between mother and daughter—Aruna and Smita. Aruna wants Smita to follow her ideology. Aruna shudders at the idea that her daughter doesn’t have respect for her religion, sanskar, etc.

Aruna: You said it stifles you?
Smita: What?

Aruna: Does being a Hindu stifle you?

Smita: No, living with one does.

Aruna: I never felt like that. I have always taken pride in my religion. I

(CP: 211)

Aruna tries to impose her belief and ideology upon Smita. Smita has her clear cut viewpoint. So Aruna feels threatened and insecure. The clash between Aruna and Smita adds additional tension in Gandhi family. Aruna’s guilt is perceived when she comes to know that she has stifled her daughter with her conventional beliefs and religious rituals. Smita, at some extent, also feels guilty of disclosing truth confined to her by Tasneem about Javed. She feels regrettance for revealing secret before her family members.

There was a little bit relationship between Smita and Bobby. Now Bobby is going to marry Tasneem. So, Javed wants to know whether there is still anything between Smita and Bobby. If so, Smita shouldn’t sacrifice for her friend Tasneem. Smita explains that there is nothing now between them. As a matter of fact, it was a very little emotional moment between them. Smita explains, “It was just one evening. A conversation that got a little personal. Nothing more.” (CP: 217)

Smita is a girl of liberal views and ideology. She doesn’t believe any false myth or discrimination. Therefore, she allows Javed to fill God’s water. She is convinced that his touch to pot of water will not bring any curse upon her family. Despite the communal and familial tension and trouble, there is the water splashing scene. It is a great beauty and joy of the play. Smita suddenly splashes water on Javed’s face and Bobby and herself.

Smita: Wake up! Wake up! It’s morning. (Splashes more water.) There! There! (CP: 218)
In this way, splashes water on each other. It helps them to forget the prevailing tension and turmoil. Later on, Smita says in a joking mood.” May be we should all run away from home like Javed. For five minutes every day. So we can quickly gulp in some fresh air and go back in”. (Moves down the ramp) (CP: 219)

It is quite explicit that the national identity mingles with religious identity. The country was divided in the name of religion. It fosters the false notions of comingling religious and national identities. This is how Hardika inquires of the boys.

Javed: We could leave now.

Hardika: Wait! (Pause) Have you ever thought of going to Pakistan?

Bobby: (with control) No.

Javed: (sarcastically). I prefer Dubai. (CP: 221)

It is evident that religion has got personal significance. It doesn’t generate trouble. But trouble comes out of prejudice towards others faith and religion. The Final Solution lies in acknowledging the similarity and respecting the difference. The non-recognition of similarities and identification of diversity in others causes distrust and hatred. It is the root cause of communal hatred or religious fanaticism. The fundamentalists are blinded by prejudice and therefore can’t see the real truth. Their actions are irrational and unguarded by right spirit of true faith. Bobby emerges as the hero of the play. His entering in Aruna’s pooja room is one of the most theatrically effective moments. After removing his footwear, he enters in her pooja room and picks up the image of Krishna.

Aruna: Don’t come here.

Bobby: That we also believe.

All members of the Mob/Chorus have both Hindu and Muslim masks, one in each hand and they pound the floor thrice.
Aruna: Stop! (Bobby is near the pooja room) Stop him!

Bobby suddenly picks up image of Krishna which is tiny enough to sit in his palm.

Put that back! Oh God! No!

Throughout the following scene, Aruna’s cries are drowned by the Mob/Chorus.

Bobby: (extends his hands and shows the image to every one) See! See! I am touching God!

Chorus All: (pounds thrice). We are not idol breakers!

Bobby: Your God! My flesh is holding Him! Look, Javed! And He doesn’t mind! (CP: 224)

Further,

Chorus All: Don’t break our pride!

Bobby: Look how He rests in my hands! He knows I cannot harm Him. He knows His strength! I don’t believe in Him but He believes in me. He smiles! He smiles at our trivial pride and our trivial shame. (CP: 224)

The play depicts chaos in the country resulting from friction between the Hindus and the Muslims offering no final solutions for the eradication of communal disharmony among the members of the both communities. In fact, the dramatist analyzes the causes and effect of communal hatred and disgust raising some questions. Alyque Padamsee aptly puts:

Can we shake off our prejudices or are they in our psyche like our genes? Will we ever be free or over –
whites against blacks, Hindu against Muslims? Are they any final solutions? 34

Dattani muses over the issue psychologically and philosophically. He attempts to find out the seed cause of the communal hatred that has devastated the land. Like a scientist, he believes in theory of cause and effect. He makes analytical inquiry into the problem for searching out the truth. He is the seeker of social and psychological truth. The problem is grounded in the loss of human values and ethical standard. It occurs first in human consciousness and then in human behavior. So we need to understand human mind and psyche from where the trouble is originated. Dattani upholds that prejudice and blind faith nurtures the issue of communal hatred. It is the outcome of the human altitude and aptitude. He provide theory of forget and tolerate for fighting back demon of communal turmoil and tension. As Bobby says;

Bobby: The tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe in one another, nothing can be destroyed. (Puts on his footwear and looks at Hardika). And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate. (CP: 225)

Dattani uses the pressure of past that makes an individual behave in a more intimate and understanding way. In this play also, most of the characters are guilt-ridden. The theme of pressure of past guilt is interwoven with the main theme of the communal hatred. The character of Ramnik feels the burden of guilt. Actually, he carries the guilt of the crime done by his father and grandfather. Other characters share this pressure for a short while, but Ramnik is constantly sharing guilt conscious. The younger generation disapproves the prejudice so they weigh down under the burden of false pride and prejudice. It is note worthy here that Dattani’s dramatic sense and stage craft ability has spared Hardika from bearing the burden of guilt throughout the life. The truth which is unknown to her is revealed at the end by Ramnik.

Hardika: What are you talking about?
Ramnik: (looks at her with pity) It’s their shop. It’s the same burnt-up shop we bought from them, at half its value. (pause) And we burnt it. Your husband. My father. And his father. They had it

Hardika: (crushed) Why didn’t you tell me? All these years.

Ramnik: You have to live with this shame only for a few years now. (CP: 226)

Thus, she is dramatically excluded from living with shame and guilt all these years. It is his guilty consciousness that prompts him to act as a civilized host when the angry crowd is outside. Santwana Halder rightly observes;

Ramnik’s guilt consciousness is thus perfectly used for dramatic purpose by Dattani. It is his guilt consciousness that prompts him to do something for the two young men who have fallen prey to the anger of the Hindu fanatics. He behaves as liberal because he cannot forget the sin of his father and grandfather. The structure of the play is based on this guilt consciousness which is introduced as a major theme.35

At the end of drama, Daksha/Hardika confronts reality and her resentment is cured. Arun is disillusioned realizing meaninglessness of her beliefs and rituals. There is a shift in the prejudiced behaviour of Hardika at the end. She asks: “
(CP: 226)

Mahesh Dattani excels in stage craft and art. His theatre is true to life. In Final Solutions, he deals with the most complex and intricate issue of communal hatred and racial pride and prejudice towards other community. He
has employed flashback techniques in this drama. So he invests multilevel sets.

I’ve used time and space in different ways in my plays. I think all the tools of theatre are available to a playwright and you just use them the way your sensibility allows you to use them. 36

The language of the play is the spoken language. Dattani uses code-mixing device in his plays. In this play, he has made a number of Indian words such as pooja room, mohallah, rath, poojari, chokra teasing the girls, pooja-paath, pallav, mehandi, baap re!, hookah, galli, paan, haram ki aulad, matka, sethani, topi, , karma, supari, gaddar, dupatta, mere own khoon ne mujhe maar daala. Daadi, attars etc.

The play succeeds in making us self-critical about our myths and notions of our faith and rituals. Everybody has his / her religious faith and creed. Mutual faith and respects can remove communal disharmony and discord. The members of the both communities should shake off the pride and ego. Trusting and understanding thoughts and feelings is the possible way to fight back communal hatred and flame. Prejudice and bias against the other community is harmful. The dramatist also dismisses the idea of sending the Muslim community to Pakistan as foolish one. It is not the solution nor is it possible. Dattani has woven some other themes along with the main theme of communal turmoil. They are liberal ideology, guilt consciousness, transferred resentment, articulating one’s own voice and anger etc. Final Solutions can be called the protest against subjugation of fanaticism, blind faith, patriarchal code, women, etc.

Dattani has made symbolic use of chorus with mask. Interestingly the mask keeps changing on, but the players of chorus remain the same. All human beings are alike. The mask is appearance; humanity is reality, supreme truth. The players put on alternatively Hindu-Muslim masks and become the Hindu Muslim mob. It suggests that communal identity is
outer form of the individual, and human identity is the permanent and transcendental to all. When men are under masks, they question the identity of others and give chase to the other. It can be said that mask is like opium. Under the impact of it, man behaves irrationally and causes chaos and destruction in society. In other words, communal hatred is caused under the intoxication of prejudice and blind faith.

Dattani has depicted double role of Daksha very purposefully. The young Daksha is quite unbiased and innocent. There is no hatred in her heart towards Muslim community. She is befriended to members of Muslim community. Old Hardika is quite biased especially with Muslim community. She was unhappy with her husband and in-laws attitude towards Muslim community. But now she feels that they were right in their behavior. She received the cruel and barbaric stroke of communal riots in Husainabad. She writes how her house was attacked and her father was slain by the Muslim fanatics. Daksha received physical punishment and mental torture for mixing and eating with Muslim family. She was shocked and grieved. But later on, she realized that Muslim has the wretched pride and ill will against the Hindu. Critically speaking, Dattani presents two view points of the same person in terms of communal attitude. However, at the end, she again realizes that she was falsely prejudiced against Muslim community especially Zarine’s family. Ramnik told her that her husband and his father got their shop burnt to get it less price in the name of communal trouble. At the close of play, she is disillusioned and her false notions are removed. Her attitude and feelings are purged.

Hardika is the synthesis of past and present. The expression of anger occurs as self defensive mechanism not as manifestation of belligerence. Dattani shows how people are falsely prejudiced against the people belonging to other community and react negatively. The dramatist depicts psychological journey of Hardika’s mind through her double role. When asked by Ranu Oniyal about *Final Solutions*, Dattani replies,
It is basically, dramatically, about two Muslim boys running away from a mob that is out to kill them and they seek shelter in a Hindu household, seemingly liberal minded and their presence through the night triggers off memories for the matriarch, the older woman, the grandmother.  

Like chorus, diary is the significant tool to connect the past with present. It helps us what happened forty years back during partition. It is a communication device for talking with spectators. It provides Daksha full freedom of criticizing and making mockery of her in-laws' family. Dattani resplies:

Absolutely and what Daksha has is her diary and through the device of the diary, she begins a dialogue with the audience and that is the only space that is offered to Daksha because she can make fun of her in-laws, she could talk very honestly about her feelings, about her friendship with the Muslim girls etc. directly to the audience and that space is denied to her with the with the other members of her household including her husband and these are memories that she retained even in her old age and these memories are triggered off and feelings of prejudice that had developed over the years are brought out in present day situation. So Daksha becomes a symbol of our historical vision, our sense of history, how prejudice is formed and how we deal with the situation today.

In the play, Dattani pleads for the cause of entire humanity irrespective of their creed and religion. He places humanism above all. He
establishes that human pride and greed leads to the communal disturbance in Indian Society. Beena Agrawal puts:

Dattani establishes that the love of humanity eliminates the dark shadows of prejudice; the solution lies not in external world but within man’s own consciousness. 39

Dattani is ebbed with uncompromising innovative spirit and unceasing desire for bold theatrical experiments, which has opened up new avenues of presentations of invisible issues on the stage. *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* is one of bold theatrical experiments on the theme of homosexuality by Dattani. It is understood that the set rules of society doesn’t allow an individual to create his ‘own designs’ and ‘own space’ unless conforming to them.

And the themes of on a Muggy Night deserve to touch the whole of society and to be touched by it. It is not simply the first play in Indian theatre to handle openly gay themes of love, partnership, trust and betrayal. It is a play how society creates patterns of behavior and how easy it is for individuals to fall victim to the expectations society creates. 40

The modern society has undergone metamorphosis. As a result of this, human experiences have become wide and varied. Dattani invests such noble human experiences in theatrical presentation. Dattani admits:

It is to do with perceptions. I don’t mean to say that this is a definite view of life. But several of images that we carry around in our minds are politically generated images and we accept them to be true. However, I don’t think so and my characters are simply personifications of my perceptions. 41
The play *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* was first performed at the Tata Theatre, Mumbai on 23rd November, 1998. The play has succeeded in evolving interest and curiosity among the audience. Later on, the play was adopted into a screen play which was produced by Sanjeev Shah. The play depicts strong passion, betrayal, frustration, conflicts in the lives of the homosexuals. The play is the dramatist’s bold attempt to look into the inner recesses of those who are excluded and forced to live lives with anxiety and insecurities in a solitude environment. There are multi sets on stage. Actually, the stage bifurcated into three acting areas. The first area is a small flat, beautifully done up ‘ethnic chic’ fashion, located in the up market area of Marine Drive, though not quite Pali Hill. The second area is completely non-realistic set comprising three levels. This area is black and expansive and characters therein are immediately suspended in a ‘Shoonya’ where they are forced to confront their inner thoughts and feelings. Below this, there is Kamlesh’s bedroom which is realistic but hidden behind a gauze wall, giving it some mystery and secrecy. The play begins with conversation between Kamlesh and the guard. Kamlesh has invited his friends to treat his depression without informing the reason. So he sends the guard for purchasing refreshment. Instead of using English version, Dattani resorts to transliteration of Hindi utterances.

Kamlesh: (Takes out some more money from his wallet) Mere kuch dost ane wale hain. Tum unko aane dena. Tum to pehchante ho sub ko. (CP: 50)

Prakash and Kamlesh were deeply in love with each other. The separation between Prakash and Kamlesh causes immense pain and distress in the heart and mind of Kamlesh. Thereafter, he comes in contact with Sharad and develops homoric relationship with him. However, Kamlesh can’t adjust himself with Sharad as he is hunted by the memories of Prakash who is now known as Ed and intends to marry Kiran, divorcée sister of Kamlesh. Ranjit is visiting from UK, working with HIV counselors. Bunny is a TV artist. Bunny is doing role of husband/ father in *Yeh Hai Hamara Parivaar*. 
The play is full of suspense and revelations. Every act functions as individual text with rising action leading to the climax. At the end of the play, all the characters are brought to the light as per their right mental colour and confusion. The dramatic technique of Dattani helps them in their self discoveries, self-assertion, self-expression, self-evolutions of their personalities wrapped in various garbs and garments.

Unity in diversity is the eye catching characteristic of India - a country of wide and varied cultural, ethnic, religious and language groups. Despite its diversity, there is oneness that binds them in a single group. In the same way; there is a uniform urge in terms of art, music etc. Dattani observes:

I am certain that my plays are true reflection of my time, place and socio economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally. 42

The play appears as the challenge to the accepted and established notions of love and marriage of our society. If sex is associated with biological perception, love is associated with the chemistry of human mind. Society has developed its mechanism for controlling sexual expression of human beings aiming at procreation. One can satisfy his / her sexual desires with the person belong to the opposite sex. But one can’t do the same with the person belonging to the same sex. But every person his / her individual self to do things in his/her own way. So, they deviate from the path paved by the society and take recourse to unconventional way. Dattani, being keen observer of this, depicts individual’s choice of fulfilling the desire of love and sex in his/her own way.

Much of ‘mainstream’ society, Dattani believes, lives in a state of ‘forced harmony’, out of sense of helplessness, or out of a lack of alternatives. Simply for lack of choice, they conform to
sterotypes like ‘homosexuals’ that in some sense leads to a kind of ghettoisation within society, little spaces to which the marginalized are pushed. 43

Dattani’s plays foreground such characters and instill them with courage to speak before the public. By doing so, he intends to negotiate the issue with the society.

Of the characters, Sharad and Deepali are comfortable with their sexuality, and have different ways of being gay. Sharad is camp, flaunting; Deepali more restrained, perhaps more stable. Kamlesh is anguished, and Ed the most obvious victim of his own insecurities. Bunny, the TV actor, is a rather more traditional Indian gay man - married. (he would say happily) while publicly denying his own nature, and Ranjit has taken an easy way out by moving to Europe where he can, ‘be himself’ more openly. 44

Dattani dramatizes dynamics of individuals’ ways of gratifying Carnival desire with a little humourist approach. Dattani provides free air of expressions to the homosexuals.

Sharad: I wanted to love you, I tried for a whole year.

Kamlesh: But you couldn’t

Sharad: I do love you.

Kamlesh: Oh! Spare me the lies!

You could never love anyone because you are still in love with Prakash! (CP: 56)
Thus, Kamlesh’s love for Prakash is quite strong and unceasing. It shocks us that gays also have strong bond of love and affection like heterosexuals. Prakash has deserted Kamlesh and decided to be heterosexual. Now he is known as Ed. Arrival of Kiran adds more tension in the atmosphere. She doesn’t know past relationship between his brother Kamlesh and her fiancé Prakash. She feels sorry for her brother’s conflicts and suffering. Nobody knows that Ed and Prakash is the same person barring Kamlesh. When Kiran speaks his full name as Edwin Prakash Methew, everybody is taken aback to know that Prakash is now flirting with Kiran. So they feel that they should inform Kiran about the past affiliation between Prakash and Kamlesh. However Kamlesh denies revealing this secret before her. The first act ends exposing real identity of Ed/Prakash. It sets forth actions of the play in new directions. One can say that play passes from one climax to another.

Sharad: Are you mad? You must be mad!

Deepali: You must tell her!

Kamlesh: You promised! All of you! It doesn’t exist.

Sharad: You tricked us! You tricked us to it!

Kamlesh: No.

It should be noted that gay/lesbian relationship is also possessive and demanding. They also demand dedication and faithfulness to their relationship and can’t bear breach of trust and confidence. Kamlesh undergoes acute pain and suffering because of Prakash’s betrayal. He doesn’t want to come into the way of happiness of his sister Kiran. Therefore, he doesn’t want to reveal truth before her sister. Moreover, his sister has past bad experience of her first marriage. She barely survives out of that pain and suffering.

The play maps the gray areas of society which forbids love and sex relationship between two people of same genders. The play focuses on
conflicts and desires of the gay/lesbian relationship in our country. It is revealed that this soil is not comfortable with gay/lesbian relationship. So there are two ways before them- either they can hide themselves into heterosexual garb or they leave the county for the west. Bunny and Ranjit are the fine example of this.

Kamlesh has become nostalgic regarding his erstwhile love affair with Prakash and has plunged into sorrow and misery. He told a lie to Sharad that he has torn all photographs. Actually, he has kept one secretly. All the photographs were not torn but sent to Prakash keeping one with him. Now he brings out that photograph containing images of Kamlesh and Prakash holding each other tightly. He wants to overcome from this sadation. Therefore, he requested his friends to show him the proper remedy of his illness.

Kamlesh is caught up into the frustration and anger resulting from the separation from Prakash. He is forlorn and frightened. He had also approached the psychiatrist to cope up with illness and anguish. But nothing could help him coming out of it. He ventilates his feelings in the following way.

Kamlesh: I knew I needed medication. I chose the psychiatrist out of the yellow pages. He pretended to understand. Until he began to tell me about aversion therapy. For a while, I believed him. Because the medication helped me cope with my depression better. Until he said I would never be happy as a gay man. It is impossible to change society, he said, but it may be possible for you to reorient yourself. (CP: 69)

On the contrary, Bunny is a gay in disguise. He is married and well set. He thinks that Kamlesh is unnecessarily bothering all these. Therefore, he advises Kamlesh to get married with a woman and continue to his feeling as a gay.
Bunny: Since you want us to help you let me give you some advice. You are looking in the wrong places to forget your Prakash. Get married. (CP: 70)

What is very fascinating about the play is bold and frank treatment to gay theme given by Dattani. Depiction of gay theme calls for guts and courage on the part of the dramatist. Dattani handles this post modernistic issue in a very daring way. He puts the whole issue in a very dynamic way. He has instilled courage and the spirit into the minds of his characters that they can openly reveal their gay identity. They don’t bother for the society’s aversion and reaction.

Kamlesh: Let them talk! If two men want to love one another, what’s the harm? (CP: 91)

They are so absorbed with their conviction and commitment that they even dare to leave county for keeping their gay relation and identity intact and safe.

Ranjit: Call me what you will. My English lover and I have been together for twelve years now. You lot will never be able to find a lover in this wretched country! (CP: 71)

Deepali is the most beautifully drawn character in the play. She asserts, “I am all for the gay men’s cause. Men deserve only men!” (CP: 60) She is also very bold and enticing lesbian person. She is quite faithful and content with her lesbian relationship. She is enraged to know various moods and opinions of homosexuals. Therefore she says “Tina and I can tell all of you to go jump!” (CP: 71)

Actions of the play are energized with the process of exorcizing Kamlesh’s mind from the Prakash’s thoughts. Everybody suggests his/her opinion regarding freeing Kamlesh from depression. Sharad shows the photograph. Everybody is eager to have a look. Sharad describes the picture as, “Cheek to cheek, pelvis to pelvis naked” (CP: 71-72) Kamlesh forbids him
of showing it other. Ultimately all have had a look at it. Kamlesh gets hold of portrait and stands by the window. Sharad suggests to have a little ritual. Ranjit also supports his view of doing ritual.

Sharad:  Why not? The whole heterosexual world is run by rituals? That wedding down stair will go on for days! (CP: 72)

The dramatist tries to show how gay people behave and act under the pressure of traditional culture consciousness which forbids them indulging in it. The scene in which Kamlesh performs rituals to get rid of Kamlesh’s memory by destroying photograph is highly dramatic and amusing too. The scene also lay bares the internal and psychological vacillation of Kamlesh’s mind. He is greatly encouraged by his friends to destroy the portrait- the last sign of his past relationship with Prakash. However, he hesitates to do it. As this juncture of action, the arrival of Kiran aggravates his mental conflicts and diverts the action. Now Prakash is a lover of his sister Kiran. So he feels acute pain and dilemma. Kiran is eager to introduce her fiancé Ed and her desire to share her views with others is exceedingly thrilling and sensational. Very few dramatists like Dattani can invest and explore such scene which creates emotional tension and turmoil in the mind of the character. Dattani has both dramatic guts and ability to handle such complex situation which places him in the row of playwrights of international repute like Shakespeare, Osborn and so on. It shocks every one that Kamlesh has approved and encouraged the relationship between Kiran and Prakash. He has sacrificed his feelings for his sister.

Everybody is puzzled as how to reveal truth before Kiran. Deepali is very keen to disclose the truth to Kiran by showing the photograph of Kamlesh and Prakash. Bunny objects her idea saying that she is creating trouble where there is no trouble. Deepali is firm in her view.

Deepali: She must know the truth! She thinks she is marrying someone who loves her very much. (CP: 84)
Bunny pleads that he loves his wife and cares for her very much. She is quite content and boasts about his work to all their neighbors. He is giving much more happiness than another heterosexual man. His children and his wife love him very much. But Deepali thinks that he cannot love his wife with the same intensity with which he can love a man. Kamlesh is also unwilling to disclose the truth. He says that Prakash has changed to become heterosexual.

Kamlesh: He goes to church every week now. They put him on to a psychiatrist. He believes his love for me was the work of the devil. Now the devil has left him.

Sharad: Now the devil has put him on to your sister. I’ll tell you what. Show her the photograph. Let her know who the devil is. (CP: 85)

The third act begins with the lights fade in on the living room of Kamlesh. The homosexuals express their displeasure to the raucous tunes and lusty cries of the baraat. Ranjit shuts the window to faint the hooting and whistling of the wedding party. The dramatist depicts the twin issues of gender and alternate sexuality in this play.

The gay matter in On a Muggy Night in Mumbai is most pervasive, and while the treatment is radical the denouement is abrasive. Two contrastive scenarios are conceived to offset each other. In one, Ed, the gay man breaks down after assaulting his male partner Kamlesh following the disclosure of their relation from a just recovered tell tale clandestine photograph and in the other the air of celebration prevails sound of bursting fire crackers and lusty yells is heard from the wedding below. This contrastive juxtaposition is a clever dramatic device of Dattani to focus on the infructuous
The dramatist discusses the issue of conversion of homosexual to heterosexual with socio-psychological ground. The play raises a question. Can a gay be a 'strait'? The play also discusses on the issue of marriage – both conventional and unconventional between the gays. Through the character of Kiran, the dramatist presents bad consequences of conventional marriage. Then the question arises is who is happy? Bunny is a gay. He has married a woman and has children. He thinks that his wife and children are quite happy and love him. Moreover, all the characters present over there are gays. So they don’t understand the importance and necessity of conventional marriage. Of course, Ed has changed from gay to straight. So he sees the wedding in the different way.

Ed: Look around you. Look outside. (Goes to the window and flings it open.) Look at that wedding crowd! There are real men and women out there! You have to see them to know what I mean. But you don’t want to. You don’t want to look at the world own little bubble. (CP: 99)

While mapping the space for the homosexual, Dattani also throws some light on the heterossexuals especially who undergo bitter experience of marriage. Kiran is tortured and troubled by her earlier husband and how she falls into the scheme of her lover Ed. She is subjected to mental anguish and pain after knowing past relationship between her lover and brother. Her future course of action is quite uncertain and unpredictable.

The homosexuals of the play can also be compartmentalized into three categories. Some homo/lesbians are trying to be straight and some of them are bi-sexual, whereas some others are content with their present identity as a ‘pure gay’. Deepali is one such character who is quite satisfied as a gay person.

The dramatist problematizes the whole issue of gay relationship and analyzes the world of gay people expecting public participation on the problem under discussion. The play presents the deception and betrayal
prevailing in the world of the gays. The dramatist unveils deceptions and trick covered into hypocrisy.

For the fault is not just the characters’ – it is everyone’s, in a society which not only condones but encourages hypocrisy, which demands deceit and negation, rather than allowing self-expression, responsibility and dignity.  

It is pertinent to note that despite gays, they are bold and self-expressive. They also realize the importance of heterosexual man and the power they exercise. They consider them real man-woman.

The homosexual wants to be powerful and commanding like the man-real man of society. They want to belong to the world of real man and woman. That is why Sharad wants to be straight. Different characters have different views about the world of real man-woman. At the end of the play, all the characters have made themselves very clear.

Each act builds to a climax of revelations and self discoveries. By the end of the play, Ed is seen as the most pathetic and self deluding of all the characters but Kamlesh too deceives himself and exploits others. (The guard, for example). The photo of Ed and Kamlesh together becomes emblematic (again a typical Dattani touch) of all that was good in their love, but which has now turned or been turned against that love. The instructive wedding music becomes the accompaniment to a dance of death indoors – and the audience must go through the classic cathartic emotions of terror and pity as the characters’ masks full, their emotions unravel and their lives
The secret of Kamlesh-Prakash gay love is exposed providing a great shock to Kiran. Once again, Kiran’s life is filled with misery and malady. She is compelled to leave Ed forever. She is infuriated and anguished upon her brother Kamlesh who deceives her by not telling the truth. All the same, she is to repose trust in him. The end of the play is self revelatory and self expressive as well as self evaluative facilitating the process of self-discovery. They have to know what they have achieved and where they have failed in life.

In this play, Dattani examines the psychology of persons who are by nature, ‘gays’ or ‘bi-sexual’ and the desire on the part of some of them to turn heterosexual. This may seem to be an unusual theme in the Indian context. But in real life such characters do exist. Hence, Dattani has re-created Dattani takes a plunge into the inner recesses of the characters, who desire to be the gay. It appears that the gays are puzzled about their identity in society. If they fulfill longing of being a gay, it will damage their identities and recognition in society which disapprove gay relationship and promotes marriage between heterosexual. Their sexuality is endangered and engulfed by the rules and regulation of the society. They kow tow before the unwritten laws of society. Torn between longing and identity, characters try to find out other alternatives. The clash results from their contradictory nature with culture of society in which they belong to.

There is a binary opposition between their nature and the culture of their society. This dichotomy between nature and culture obstructs their love and poisons their minds. The note of revolt against the society is unmistakeable. In the page of globalization, nature triumphs over culture.
Dattani is very dexterous in symbolic presentation. There are two worlds in the play- the world of heterosexual and world of homosexuals. They are separated by the window of the Kamlesh’s room. The opening and shutting down of window is very symbolic. The heterosexual are enjoying in light where as homos are forced to confine in the darkness. They see the world of heterosexuals through the window. Mrs. Merchant’s affair and barat are visible when window is opened. It means that they are sharing light where as the homos are sharing the darkness. That’s why Kamlesh doesn’t like to keep window open. He also doesn’t like Sharad’s looking out through window. Being asked homosexualism or lesbianism, Dattani replies:

It is natural although it is not the norm in any of the species. Like being left-handed in a predominantly right-handed world. 50

In this way, Dattani is convinced that gay relationship is not something that is called abnormal or disgusting. It occupies little space, but it does exist in a normal way. It is common knowledge to put that there are so many people in our society who are pursuing sexual pleasure with the partners of their same sex. It doesn’t create much hustle and bustle in society. But here, the play depicts the issue of love marriage between same sex persons and breach of the relationship. So it generates turbulence and tension.

The play also provides fine platform for the discussion on general belief or concept of ‘man’. The play ends with Sharad singing a song ‘What makes A Man A Man?’ (CP: 111). He goes offstage singing “I ask...” (CP: 111) This is the stroke of Dattani’s dramatic technique. He dramatically mingles the issue of self-identity with the issue of gay love and same sex-marriage. It lends an extra load and pressure to the play and also philosophizes the whole discussion.

Dattani is true dramatic genius who voids the variation between the paper script and performance creating the voice of the subordinate
colonized sections of our society. He has an awareness and also ability to look into the invisible or taboo issue wrapped in web of hypocrisy and tradition.

The gay are torn between social tradition and individual’s choice of sexual pleasure. He has prepared stage considering mental spaces of the characters of the play. His innovative stage technique is so effective that his encoded text message ceases to be self-reflective.

His use of stage craft is extremely intricate and it makes the text echoing multiple connotations. For dramatic representation is neither a matter of the description nor of presentation but it is a matter of evocation. It is only with appropriate performance that the experience becomes vital and

Our society has exclusively promoted heterosexual relationship as the prime mode of sexual expression, as it is only means of survival human race on the earth. So gay relationship has been greatly discouraged and looked upon as an act of contempt and disgust since time immemorial.

Dattani’s plays come as a challenge to our conservative Indian society. It strikes at the root of concept of continuity of civilization through the promotion of idea of centrality of heterosexual relationship in society, where the gays are subjected to exclusion and contempt. The play presents struggle and repulsions of the gays against the backdrop of the culture which bans on gay relationship. Longing for social approval and freedom is lurking in the hearts of the most of the characters. Non corresponding nature of the character with society is the under prevailing heat of the muggy night. The dramatist shows societal self and individual self at conflict. Here heat signifies the conflict prevailing in the minds of the characters. It is observed:
For the Indian male, fear of losing his identity could be the prime reason for clinging onto regressive role-playing. 52

Refusal of social approval and conversion into a strait is at the centre of their discussion and deliberation. While commenting on the Mango Soufflé, film adaption of the play Muggy Night in Mumbai, Dattani puts:

There are grey areas in people’s relationship with others too, and through my film, I have brought them to notice. 53

The characters are sick and depressed but they are not crippled ethically. They are struggling to cater their own needs and necessity. The social rules and regulations are in their way of fulfillment of their desires. It is observed:

In both these plays, On a Muggy Night in Mumbai and Do Needful, the dramatist while expressing his sympathy for gays who are not morally degraded but mentally sick, expose their struggle with their own inner selves. The possibility of the shared spaces common to women and homosexual is put to active use here with the identities of its protagonists. The common oppressor is the patriarchal structure that refuses to allow any space for the growth of individual beyond a set pattern of gender determine 54

The characters suffer due to accepted norms of sexual expression. Heterosexuality is a rule and homosexuality is deemed to be an act of trespassing or ethical pervasion. The resistance against this value generates conflicts leading to emotional crisis in the lives of characters. It is explained,
on a more personal level, however, the term ‘gay’ also brought with it and in creakingly wide spread reference to sexuality as a quality or property of the self: A person ‘has’ a sexuality, gay or otherwise, which can be reflexibly grasped, interrogated and developed.  

Dattani’s dramatic genius is so innovative and radical that he can depict excluded and forbidden issues very successfully. He observes that there are certain issues which die in the minds of the persons. The gay desire is lying in the human psyche and is very essential to deal with in a proper way.

The play *Thirty Days in September*, cleft into three acts, is a tragic tale of a child’s sexual abuse. The play was first performed at the Prithvi Theatre, Mumbai on 31st May, 2001. The play was commissioned by RAHI, a support group for women survivors of incest. Little Dubey observes;

*Thirty Days in September* has touched hearts and consciences everywhere. Sensitive and powerful without ever offending sensibilities, it manages to bring home the horror and the pain within the framework of a very identifiable mother-daughter relationship.  

Dynamic and innovative theatrical art of Dattani captures the stark reality of life. He is famous for presenting taboo issues like homosexuality, child’s sexual abuse, mal treatment to the eunuch, prostitution etc. In the present play, Dattani reflects on the problem of sexual molestation of the child and far reaching impact thereof.

Dattani has used segmented stage. The stage is divided into four acting areas. All the action moves without any set changes between scenes. The play begins with Mala’s talking to the imagined counsellor in the single seater opposite to her. She doesn’t talk to the audience. Her
conversation is being taped, but she is not aware of it. Mala Khatri is a young girl protagonist of the play. She is victimized through sexual colonialism. She tolerates sexual molestation silently during her childhood period. She realizes the pain and agony of this after coming into adolescent period. She feels that her existence is caught into hostile surrounding. It is a disgusting tale of incest-illicit sexual relationship between the nearest kindred. Mala is molested by her nearest relative. She feels that human relationship is a betrayal and weighs down under the pressure of such horrible realization. Mala becomes the victim of sensuous desires of her uncle Vinay who traps Mala into sexual web for gratifying his filthy passion and lust for sexuality. What is more shocking and heart-rending to Mala is that her own mother, Shanta who observes silence against injustice done to her.

Mala’s mind is haunted by the past memories of her molestation. Child sexual Abuse (CSA) is an umbrella term which covers any sexual activity with the child by an adult. It is observed that incest creates the worst horror and prolonged psychological trauma. Sometimes it leads to further victimization when the child grows adult. Mala’s case is like this. Sometime, we feel that fault lies with Mala who attracts other men and invite them for sexual gratifications. She acts as a girl of loose character, but the perversion in her present behavior is caused by her molestation during childhood. She understands reasons working behind her mental disorder and hostility towards socio-cultural context. Therefore, she tells Deepak that he can’t just understand her as he is unaware of her wounded psyche propensity for such sexual colonialism in future. Both Mala and her mother Shanta are gasping under the uncompromising guilt. Shanta has sought consolation in singing ‘Mere to Giridhar Gopal, Doosro na koi, Mere to Giridhar Gopal...’ (CPII: 9)

The most of Dattani’ plays are located in urban milieu. The present play is also located in upper middle class family in Delhi. Dattani explores very cleverly the invisible issue of child sexual abuse. He puts:

I would see the setting of Thirty Days is upper middle class. I choose this setting because I did
not want them to dismiss sexual abuse as something that does not happen to people like them.  

The most of the actions of the play are performed in the living room of Shanta and Mala’s home in suburb of Delhi. It occupies the central portion of stage. The dominant feature is a large picture of Shri Krishna. Moreover, a life sized doll of seven years old girl is placed on the chair in the background. With lights fade on her, Mala is seen seated at the counselor’s desk. She is disconnected from the society and is more at peace with herself. She has taken a journey and has arrived somewhere, psychologically. It is visible in her bodily gestures. The play begins with confessional tone. It is self realization of the sin born out of incest -her molestation by her uncle Vinay. The play opens with Mala’s furious but painful assertions:

nothing to hide. Not for me. After all, it is he who must hide. He should change his name, not me. It is he who must avoid being recognized. In people’s homes, at parties, hopefully even on the streets. He should look other way when someone spots him anywhere on this planet. And I can make that thinking about it almost as if it were a pleasant memory.) I wish he were here now, so I could see his face when I tell him I have nothing to hide. Because I kno

Mala is frustrated and grieved after the realization of the awfulness of the thing. She feels acute pain and trauma that her life is ruined and she stands nowhere. She carries the burden of the incest. She was falsely persuaded and tempted to do it by her uncle.

Mala, as a child, unaware the consequences of the relation, was seduced and molested. She might or might not enjoy it, but she acutely experiences now the horror and hideousness of the thing. She derives self consolation that she was innocent and ignorant. She didn’t know anything. It
wasn’t her fault. She should not feel shame and guilt. She blames her demon uncle Vinay who preyed her into that sinister behavior. It is observed:

In dealing with the dynamics of human relationship within the range of theatre, Dattani expresses his concern for taboo relationship, discrimination of the values on the basis of gender, prejudices, uncertain liaisons and the disgust for sexual colonialism.  

Mala analyzes the whole events and the way it procedes. She hates herself and calls herself characterless person. Gradually, her wrath and anger diverts towards her mother. The reality is that she is guilt ridden. She feels anguish and agony at the idea of her illicit affairs. She is convinced that it could have been averted if her mother cared for her. This is the real cause behind acute anguish and agony of Mala’s mind. Dattani seems to assert that betrayal within the framework of the familial relationship generates unbearable anguish and frustration. Shanta’s betrayal causes the worst horror in Mala’s life. As Mala painfully puts:

I don’t know. I can’t explain it. The only person who can, who could have prevented all this is my mother. Sometimes I wish she would just tell me to stop. She could have prevented a lot (CPII: 18)

Shanta turns to the portrait of Shri Krishna whenever she doesn’t want to respond the question asked by Mala. So, in a fit of anger, Mala gives a threat of throwing that picture out of the house.

There is some sort of relation between Deepak, a young boy of a colonel named Bhatia, and Mala. The boy is ready to marry Mala, but she avoids marrying him. Shanta also wants her marriage with Deepak. Moreover, Shanta has known his family. She is anxious to get Mala settled as early as possible. The main motive behind her marriage is to enable Mala to forget all that have happened. However, Mala is not keen to marry him. She is highly
enraged and angered upon her mother. Mala expresses her anger and wrath towards her mother in the following way.

Mala

because that’s what I got whenever I came to you, hurt and crying. Instead of listening to what I had to say, you stuffed me and I won’t ever let you forget that! (CPII: 24)

Shanta tries to escape from the reality - the molestation of her daughter by her uncle Vinay. After reading rape case in newspaper, she told her what had happened to her. Her mother, instead of taking it seriously, changed the topic. Mala blames her saying that she has never listened to her problem and pain. Even today, Shanta asks Mala to forget it as a nightmare.

Shanta:

Mala: I am not talking about a bad dream! I am talking about the time when uncle Vinay would molest me. When I was seven. Then eight. Nine. Ten. Every vacation when we went to visit him or when he came to stay with us. You were busy in either the Pooja room or the Kitchen. I would go to papa and cry. Before I could even tell him why I was crying he would tell me to go to you. You always fed me and- and you never said it but I knew what you were saying to me without words. That I should eat well and go to sleep and the pain will go away. And, and-oh God! It did go away. But it comes back. It didn’t go away forever! (CPII: 25-26)

Shanta lied to Mala that Shanta’s husband left the family and stayed with other woman. However, he continued to send money every month and paid the rent. He had never visited in fifteen years. Mala blamed her for this tragedy. Presently, Mala is thirty plus and wants to be a little girl - devoid of all the scars that causes the anguish and agony. Later on, Mala realizes that
he left because of her mother. Shanta’s brother Vinay bought her a flat. Mala didn’t like it. So, she blames her mother that she had asked him for that.

Shanta: I didn’t ask for this, Mala. I did not.

Mala: Yes you did. He didn’t just buy a flat. He bought you!

Shanta: That’s not true! Oh God!

Mala: He bought your silence. So that you can never tell anyone what he did to your daughter!

Sigmund Freud, one of the famous thinkers in the whole range of history of psychology and the founder of psycho analysis, has explained dynamics of interpersonal human relationship banking on sexual needs and instincts of human beings. Human being is basically a biological phenomenon and subject to sexual urges. He upholds that suppression of sexual urges brings adverse consequences in the behaviours and action of human beings. Sometimes, it affects the natural course of human action and causes the behavioral perversion.

However, Karen Horney, the founder of American Institute of psychoanalysis, objects to the certain theories propounded by Sigmund Freud. She attributes that discontent for civilization results from ‘basic anxiety’. Every child needs to be catered with proper warmth and love as well as attention and affection. The deficiency of these things facilitate non-amicable dealings with the surroundings and ultimately leads towards neurotic order. The child placed in non-corresponding social and familial environment in terms of love and affection turns out to be the hostile to the world showing contempt for cultural values and social canons. Like a psychologist, Dattani contemplates on the disintegrated self and its abnormal responses in this play.

Mala suffers from the pain resulting from her sense of guilt and shame. The molestation by her uncle and silence against this crime,
maintained by her mother keeps Mala constantly at unrest and anxiety. Karen Horney viewed:

neuroses are generated by cultural disturbances and conflicts which the person has experienced in accentuated form mainly in childhood, in which he did not receive love, guidance, respect, opportunities for growth. She described the neurotic character structure as a dynamic process with basic anxiety, defenses against anxiety, conflict, and solutions to conflict as its essential elements. 60

She observes that every human being has an innate drive towards self-realization and that neurosis is essentially a process obstructing this healthy development.

Dattani depicts multiple layers of Mala’s slain psyche. Mala feels pangs of guilt of her own fault and also of her mother. She holds her mother as well as herself responsible for her physical and mental disorder. Her conscience is constantly biting her. She has fragmented and disordered consciousness. She finds herself unable to adjust with the other human beings of her surroundings. She feels a sense of uprootedness and alienation. Her behaviour is conflicting to the socio-cultural connotation and context. This prevents her accepting proposal of marriage from Deepak. She says that she can’t marry him. He cannot understand her problem.

Deepak: Why not?
Mala: You don’t understand! You JUST DON’T UNDERSTAND! I cannot love you. (CPII: 54)

Mala’s self is fragmented and disordered. Therefore, Dattani makes use of incomptele sentences, monologues, recorded voice and other symbols. The doll’s symbol is very effective. It corresponds with the idea of
numbness or silence which Shanta maintains against victimization of her
daughter for sexual gratification. It also symbolizes that Mala is not permitted
to express reality by society. Generally, Dattani takes up serious issues for
the contemplation. As an abled artist, he fuses comic or funny scenes with the
serious ones. *Thirty Days in September* is completely somber drama. The
seriousness and horror is so powerful that doesn’t allow him to be funny. He
admits:

> I sometimes see the funny side of even the tragic
events that I am conceived with. But in Thirty
Days, I did not have that scope. There’s no way
you can see the funny side.  

The play features the emotional crisis resulting from the lack of
parental love and care during the childhood period. After the molestation,
Mala needed love and guidance, care and concentration from her parents.
Unfortunately, she was deprived of it. Her mother decided to be a deaf and
dumb, to her pain and suffering. This aggravates her pain and suffering as
well as her agony and anguish. Instead of responding her cry sympathetically,
Shanta has sought shelter at the lap of Gopal (God) leaving innocent flower to
be crushed and distorted under this modern Kansh (demon) who kills seven
children of his own sister. His were the mortal wounds, but Mala’s demon
uncle has made incurable wounds on her mind, body and soul. They are the
physical, psychological and spiritual wounds. The dramatist projects
fragmented existence of Mala in the play. Mala’s self is divided and her
psyche is slain and her consciousness is scarred.

Dattani is famous for employing flash back or time shift device. In this play also, he depicts the past and present with the shift of memory. His plays focus on the margin both issues and the people. Like marginalization of the certain sections of society, some issues are also thrown at the periphery. Dattani locates these issues and presents them through his theatrical art. Child sexual abuse is the issue thrown at the periphery dismissing it associated with the labour class. Dattani breaks this conventional notion by
depicting it in the middle class family of Delhi in this play. Dattani doesn’t look at the thing wearing conventional spectacle of the society. He looks at the theme other way and takes a plunge beneath the surface for searching truth, which is shocking and challenging. He first puts the truth on the page in form of script and presents on the stage in his own innovative and daring way afterwards. He facilitates direct communication between his victimized characters and audience offering brain storming exercise to the audience about the problem dramatized so. In this way, he opens up channels of communications between the suppressed and the members of society.

_Thirty Days in September_ depicts the raw emotion of the character and the naked realities covered beneath the cloaks of hypocrisy, shamness of behavior, social or familial relationship, silence or numbness of the people etc. Shanta observed silence against the molestation of her daughter, Mala by her brother Vinay. She puts on cloak of silence for avoiding the protest for the injustice. Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri rightly observes in this connection:

> Child sexual abuse spans a range of problems, but it is this complicity of the family through silence and lack of protest that is the ultimate betrayal for the abused.  

In a vain attempt of defending herself, Shanta, holds Mala responsible for the tragedy arguing that she has willingly participated in the molestation for deriving carnival pleasure. In fact, Shanta fails to perceive Mala’s ignorance and immaturity for understanding such things. Her seeming pleasure is not real pleasure, but it is her ignorance. She wasn’t old enough to understand horror of the things. So when she grows and understands the stark reality, her bliss becomes perpetual damnation of her soul and identity. Her pleasure becomes the protest against the betrayal especially towards her mother who betrays her by maintaining silence. The result is uprising and aggression. It is attributed:
Aggression and violence are unquestionably male while submission and vulnerability are traditionally female. But of late women writers are not only exploring the issues of female autonomy and female vulnerability but are showing how in the face of male violence, women do respond by committing it against others, though after enduring all kinds of hardship and always as the last resort. 63

Among others, realization and redemption are the two dominant functions of the literature. The play realizes its child protagonist her self-guilt and redeems her. She feels the pain of sin resulting from realization of fifth of self guilt. It is because of this guilt consciousness that discourages her interaction with psychiatrist. As Mala says,

(CP: 9)

Critically, Mala is weighed down at the realization that besides being it physical molestation, it was a rape of her honour and identity as well as her soul and innocence.

Dattani doesn’t offer any specific theory of feminism nor does he make attempt of moralizing the audience. He is neither preacher nor teacher of values and ideas prevalent in society. He is a presenter of stark realities of urban life. His characters are suffering from the past guilt and sin. So, his dramatic art provides a space for redeempting their mind and soul.

At the end of the play, Shanta responds painfully to Mala’s question of being remained silent.

Shanta : I remained silent not because I wanted to, but I didn’t know how to speak. I-I cannot speak. I cannot say anything. My tongue
Deepak) Please save her. I did not save her. I did not know how to save her. How could I save her when I could not save myself? (CPII: 54-55)

Shanta breaks the silence and voices her pain and suffering. She tells how and what had happened to her when she was of six.

Shanta:

only summer holidays. For ten years! For ten years! (pointing to the picture of God) I looked to Him. I didn’t feel anything. I didn’t feel pain. I didn’t feel pleasure, only silence. Silence means Shanti. Shanti. But my tongue is cut off. No. No. It just fell off

(CPII: 55)

Thus, Mala realizes the real reason of her mother’s silence. She also had the same pain to feel and forget. Therefore Mala says:

cursed you of not recognizing my pain, you never felt any anger at me for not recognizing yours. We were both struggling to survive but- I never acknowledged It’s not your fault, mother. Just as it wasn’t my fault. Please, tell me that you’ve forgiven me for blaming you. Please tell me that.

(CPII: 58)

His dramatic art has humanitarian touch. It enables the character overcome from the permanent feeling of the sin or evil. At the end, Mala is realized greater truth- the reasons working behind her mother’s silence and her own negligence towards her mother’s plight. Therefore, she tells her mother at the close of the play:

Please let me be of help. (Gently turning her mother’s face towards her) It’s not your fault, mother. Just as it wasn’t my fault. Please, tell me that you’ve forgiven me for blaming you. Please tell me that. (CPII: 58)
Mala realizes the victimization of her own mother and pain resulting from it. She feels relieved and relaxed. Shanta is praying God and she rests her head in her lap. She is attached to her now. She feels that they are not at fault. They are the victims of others. Dattani very skillfully shows the theme of sin, suffering and salvation. Mala commits sin out of innocence. She suffers when she realizes the horror of the thing.

Various opinions and interpretation are available on salvation. In Christianity, it is associated with Jesus Christ who saves mankind by incurring punishment of death upon himself. There are some other religious schools which maintain that it is achieved by utilizing ‘inner human resources’ such as meditation, accumulation of wisdom, asceticism, rituals or good deeds.’

Soteriology deals with theological analysis of salvation offering the means to achieve it. In a sense, salvation is “deliverance” or “redemption” from sin and its effects.  

Mala blames herself and feels the filth of self guilt. Eventually, she realizes that neither her mother nor she is at fault. Her emotions are purged and notions are changed. She is redeemed from the suffering resulting from the self consciousness of the filthiness and ugliness of the guilt.

The fragmented utterances, violent images, coarse dialogues, self blaming, haunted images etc. shows tension and turmoil in the mind of Mala. It also shows how the evil of sexual colonialism turns the woman’s life into a hell of sin and suffering and forces her into a perennial pain and self accusation. Such crime damages the woman psyche and becomes the permanent part of her consciousness.

A close look at Dattani’s plays reveals that they dramatize fractures of familial relationship which is the characteristic feature of modern Indian urban society. They live under the same roof, but shares different views and ideas towards life and world. *Thirty Days in September* depicts the
issue which involves psychological and sociological speculations along with philosophical and moral musings over the things.

The play begins with Mala’s self realization and self accusation and also sense of betrayal towards her mother who observed silence against molestation of her daughter in her puberty. The further actions of the play are energized with this. The climax comes when Shanta, breaks her long observed silence the narrating her unhappy lot and her inability to save her daughter from demon brother. With this revelation the play takes newer track and ends with happy union between mother and daughter as though wrapped in grief and remorse.
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